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A PLEA

FOR

THE ABOLITION OF TESTS

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

110168
at

BY

GOLDWIN SMITH.

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PREFACE.

AS the writer was one of those who signed the Petition presented to Parliament last Session for the Abolition of Tests, he feels it due to the rest of those who signed, to say that the following pages express his own views and sentiments alone. He has not written in concert with, or with the knowledge of, any other person.

It may be as well here to state briefly the existing Law.

The Act 17 and 18 Vict. c. 81, abolished all Oaths and Declarations at Matriculation and on taking the degree of Bachelor in Arts, Law, or Medicine. But by the Statutes of the University no person can take the degree of Master or Doctor, or become a member of Convo-

cation, the governing body of the University*, without subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles, and, in addition, the three Articles of the 36th Canon, the same which are subscribed by the Clergy at their Ordination, and the second of which, pledging the person subscribing "to use the forms prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and none other," is properly applicable to Clergymen alone.

Degrees in Theology are confined by the Statutes of the University to persons in Priests' Orders.

By the Act of Uniformity all Heads and Fellows of Colleges, among other persons, are required, at their admission, to make a declaration of Conformity to the Liturgy of the Church of England.

In most of the Colleges the Fellows are obliged, either by the College Statutes or by the Ordinances of the late Commission, to take the

* The Cambridge Act enables persons to take the Master's degree without the Tests, but not to become a member of the governing body.

degree of M. A. or one of the Superior degrees, for which, as before stated, subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles and the three Articles of the 36th Canon is required. In other Colleges, the Fellowships are expressly confined either by their own Statutes, or by the Ordinances of the Commission, to Members of the Church of England. In some cases both provisions occur. In one case only, it is believed, the limitation of the Fellowships to Members of the Church of England rests on the Act of Uniformity alone.

The Act 17 and 18 Vict. authorizes persons to open Private Halls for the reception of Students, with a license from the Vice-Chancellor. But the Master of a Private Hall must be a Member of Convocation, and must therefore have taken the Tests.

OXFORD, January 21, 1864.

A PLEA

FOR

THE ABOLITION OF TESTS.

A PETITION from members of the University of Oxford for the abolition of tests of religious opinion on admission to academical degrees was presented to both Houses of Parliament last Session. It was signed by 106 persons, two of whom were Heads of Colleges, while the rest were or had been connected, as Professors, Tutors, or Fellows, with University or College government and education. The petition was presented in the House of Lords by Earl Russell, in the House of Commons by Mr. Dodson. Its prayer was supported in the Upper House by Earl Granville and the Bishop of London, and in the Lower House by Mr. Buxton, Mr. Grant Duff, and Mr. Goschen. Mr. Gladstone, without actually supporting the prayer of the petition, commended the question, as one requiring attention, to the consideration of the University, and went so far as to intimate his own opinion that the stringency of the present tests was in the case of laymen, at least, open to reasonable objection.

The opponents of the petition directed their arguments more against the manner in which it had been got up, than against its actual prayer, or the reasons by which its prayer was supported. It will scarcely be thought presumptuous to claim for the persons whose names were appended to it credit for not having intentionally done anything insidious or unfair towards their opponents*. Those of them especially who are clergymen, and who know well what obloquy they incur in their own profession, and how their professional prospects may be affected, by a declaration in favour of liberty of conscience, have, in signing the petition, given a sufficient guarantee at least for their integrity and courage. The changes which the document underwent were not intended to mislead opponents, but were such as documents intended to be signed by a large number of persons, who, though agreed as to their main object, may differ in details, are very apt to undergo. An anxiety to make the petition as little open to misconstruction as possible, especially on religious grounds, will scarcely be imputed as a fault to the framers. And it was certainly not by any contrivance or in accordance with any wish of the petitioners that the presentation was postponed till very near the end of the Session of Parliament, when it was scarcely possible that a question of any importance should be

* I believe I am justified in stating that the Vice-Chancellor wrote to Lord Derby assuring him that though the time when the petition was presented might be thought inconvenient to its opponents, no suspicion of any insidious intention on the part of the petitioners could be entertained. Mr. Henley's misstatements, couched in language indicative of their levity, may safely be allowed to find their own level.

effectively discussed, and quite impossible that the discussion should result in legislation.

The number of those who signed the petition must be compared, as Mr. Gladstone justly remarked, not with that of Convocation at large, but with that of the much smaller body of men who hold or have held headships, professorships, fellowships, or tutorships, and have thus not merely possessed the academical franchise, but been really connected with the University. It must also be regarded, as Mr. Gladstone emphatically avowed, not merely as a stationary quantity, but as indicative of a growing feeling in the University; in which, twenty years ago, probably not a tenth of the number would have been found ready to sign a similar petition. And further, the number of clerical signatures must be estimated as having been obtained in the face of a hostile feeling on the part of the clergy generally, falling little short of professional terrorism, which vents itself in the gravest imputations against teachers of Christianity, convicted, by their own act, of believing that reason and conscience, when left unfettered by political tests, will bear free witness to Christian truth.

It has been said that the petitioners ought to have applied in the first instance to the University: and that they were guilty of a breach of academical loyalty in going at once to Parliament for relief. No one can feel more strongly than the writer of these pages, no one, when there was occasion, has more earnestly asserted the expediency of keeping the great places of national education independent of the political government of

the country and of the influences by which, especially under the system of Party, that government is controlled. No one can be more sensible of the evils which arose, both to the University and the nation, when Oxford, the common heritage of Englishmen, became, through unhappy accidents, the miserable tool of the Jacobite faction; and which would again arise if ever she should be made the tool of a similar faction again. But as regards the present question, it is to be observed, in the first place, that these tests were, in fact, imposed from without by the arbitrary exercise of a political power which was then vested in the Crown and exerted through Chancellors nominated by the Sovereign, but which has now passed into the hands of the Legislature, and carried with it the responsibility for the maintenance of the tests. In the second place, it is to be observed that to the University, in the proper sense of the term, it is idle to apply, since she is not a free agent in the matter. The great majority of Convocation consists of clergymen not resident in the University, nor much touched by academical needs or sympathies, who come on these occasions to vote—and can be little blamed for voting—with a single eye to the objects and interests, necessarily and perhaps rightly paramount in their minds, of the clerical profession. To ask such a Convocation to repeal religious tests would seem rather like an act of ironical mockery, especially if the inevitable refusal were to be followed by an appeal to Parliament, than like a tribute of allegiance and respect.

What is it that actually takes place when these questions are brought before us in Convocation? The term before last, the Council proposed a petition against Mr. Bouverie's bill for enabling colleges, if they thought fit, to admit candidates to fellowships without tests of religious opinion. When Convocation assembled it was evident that the members really engaged in the work of the University, to whom arguments founded on the claims of academical industry and the expediency of extending the benefits of the University, might have been addressed with some hope of success, and with not a few of whom such arguments did in fact prevail, were swamped by clergymen having only clerical objects and interests, whom such arguments would not only have failed to move, but perhaps have hardened in their determination. It was therefore of little consequence, that, by a strained construction (as many thought) of the mediæval statute forbidding us to speak in English, we were denied liberty of debate, and compelled to agree not only to the prayer of the petition, but to a whole string of what appeared to opponents very questionable reasons, without discussion and in the lump.

Parliament has already taken the subject in hand. It has interposed so far as to abolish the tests at Matriculation, and on the Bachelor's degree, and thus to save us for the future from the crime (for it deserves no milder name) of oppressing and corrupting, for political purposes, the consciences of boys. But this measure of relief, in favour of which not only a regard for morality, but almost the voice of decency

and humanity might seem to plead, was opposed by the clerical party in the University, and by the allies of that party in the House of Commons. Much more would the same party oppose and defeat any further measure of emancipation, if it were brought forward within the University in the manner which our opponents prescribe.

We are not guilty then of any disrespect towards the University, or of any want of regard for her real independence, in making our appeal to statesmen for her emancipation from restrictions which we sincerely believe to be injurious to her utility and greatness as a national place of "religion, learning, and education."

The statesmen to whom the appeal will be made will not be those who are indifferent to the first of these three objects. On the contrary, some of the arguments to be tendered are such as no statesman could entirely appreciate who had not grasped the truth, which is as much one of political philosophy as of Revelation, that religion is the foundation of society. At the same time, to entertain any proposal of change a man must, no doubt, be so far a liberal as to be willing to submit all human institutions (from the number of which religious restrictions imposed by the Legislature, or by the Crown, will scarcely be excepted) to the test of reason and morality; and to believe it possible, at least, that the progress of society, continued through all the ages, may not have been arrested for ever at the exact point at which the present generation stands. And, in the same way, it is

of course idle to plead for liberty of any kind to a man who has made up his mind, on grounds supposed to be above reason and conscience, that all desire of liberty is rebellious wickedness, and that the prevalence of such a desire is a sign that the nations are given over to the Spirit of Evil, and that the world is drawing towards its end.

There are two questions at issue, in principle distinct from each other, which it is necessary to a right understanding of the subject, and the fairest course towards our opponents, to discuss separately, though they are intimately connected together, and may perhaps practically run into one. The first question relates to the maintenance of the existing tests. The second question relates to the confinement of the Universities, or at least of their higher honours, franchises, and emoluments, to the members of the Established Church. The system of exclusion might be maintained in full force with less stringent tests than the present, or indeed without any tests at all. England and Spain are now, it is believed, the only countries in which the Universities are not free. In Spain, besides the general security given by the penal suppression of all religions but that established by the State, each candidate for admission is, or was till lately, required to produce a certificate from a priest. Such a certificate, if demanded of every candidate for the higher degrees, or for a fellowship in the University of Oxford, would fully serve the purpose of exclusion: and it might be given by the priest without putting any actual test of doctrine, from his

personal knowledge of the candidate's character as a faithful and obedient member of the Church.

In fact, proposals for relaxing the stringency of the tests have actually been made by some of those who think it necessary to maintain the system of exclusion. These persons perceive the immorality of the present system; and if their measures of concession do not obtain more support among their friends, it is mainly perhaps because their friends feel that tests of religious opinion have been generally condemned by the sense, conscience, and experience of mankind, and that though it may be possible, in a certain condition of political parties, to cling to those which remain, it would be impossible, if these were abandoned, to enact new tests in their place.

In truth, who can look the present system fairly in the face without seeing at once that it is immoral? A man presents himself to receive the final reward of his industry as a student, a reward in which the friends who have supported him at the University have an interest as well as himself, and the renunciation of which involves not merely the direct loss of the degree or fellowship *, but the fatal stamp of social nonconformity and of an eccentric mind. You contemplate the possibility of his being unwilling to subscribe to such a mass of doctrine as the Thirty-nine Articles, either from a doubt as to its being

* Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles is not necessary for election to a fellowship; but it is necessary for holding one; Fellows generally being required (as was stated in the Preface) to take the M. A. degree.

unmixed truth, or simply because he feels that it is his duty to God to keep his conscience free: otherwise there would be no need of tests at all. Yet you call upon him to subscribe as the condition of his receiving the reward. Do you not hereby wilfully and deliberately tempt him, by the bribe of worldly advantages, and the threat of worldly degradation, to lie to God and to his own soul? Such a system may serve the political interests of an Establishment, but is it possible that it can serve the spiritual interests of the Christian Church? Can it long stand before the awakened moral sense of mankind? If we were not made callous by official custom and party casuistry, should we fail to perceive that no imaginable sin against the God of Truth can be greater or more deadly than that of deliberately corrupting the spirit of truth in a young heart?

The Articles contain several hundred propositions of Theology. They bear upon them throughout the evident marks of the element of doubt and controversy out of which they arose*. They are in their nature an attempt to settle questions of opinion by an arbitrary exercise of political power: and those by whom the power was wielded were men, to say the least,

* It need hardly be said that the Sixth Article, which asserts that there *never was any doubt* in the Church as to the authority of any book of our Canon, is a most sinister monument of the controversial exigencies of the framers. The same thing may be said of the opening sentence of the Preface to the Ordination Service,—"It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." The word *diligently* seems to betray a consciousness of the character of the statement.

actuated more by motives of state than by motives of religion, and whose characters were such that it would be not so much an absurdity as a blasphemy to suppose that their spiritual perceptions could supersede the voice of God in conscience as the criterion of religious truth. The imposition of the Articles on Oxford is historically connected with the name of the Earl of Leicester, then our Chancellor, a villain assuredly, and probably the murderer of his wife. Parliament itself, which, so far as the laity were concerned, was, and still is, the legal imponent, ratified these formularies only after considerable discussion; and even then limited subscription to those Articles "which *only* concern the confession of the true Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments," a limitation which was arbitrarily disregarded in practice by the bishops *. Who can pretend to be assured that formularies so framed, under such circumstances, and by such hands, are absolute and final truth? If we have no assurance

* It was on this occasion that a remarkable conversation passed between Mr. Wentworth, the most distinguished assertor of civil liberty in the House of Commons, and Archbishop Parker. "I was," says Wentworth, "among others the last Parliament sent for unto the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the articles of religion that then passed this house. He asked us 'why we did put out of the book the articles for the homilies, consecration of bishops, and such like.' 'Surely, Sir,' said I, 'because we were so occupied in other matters that we had no time to examine them how they agreed with the word of God.' 'What,' said he, 'surely you mistake the matter, you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein!' 'No, by the faith I bear to God,' said I, 'we will pass nothing before we understand what it is, for that were but to make you popes: make you popes who list,' said I, 'for we will make you none.' See Hallam, Const. Hist. chap. iv.

that they are absolute and final truth, how can it be just to impose them upon the consciences of men? And what true policy can bid us outrage justice?

Is it to secure unanimity of opinion on religious subjects in the Universities that the legislature imposes these tests? If so, we have an argument against the continuance of the system, the validity of which statesmen never fail to recognize. Decisive experience has shown that it entirely fails to secure the object for which it was instituted. There is not unanimity, but the greatest diversity of opinion, in the Universities: and this diversity extends, the advocates of the present system themselves being witnesses, not merely to secondary questions, but to the fundamental principles of faith. The division is not kept secret, but is displayed in fierce controversies and mutual persecutions. Nor is it only of to-day or yesterday. It appeared with equal violence in the times when the Arminians, headed by Laud, were contending with the Puritans for the possession of Oxford. It has appeared alike at every period when intellect has been active and conscience has been awake. It has slumbered only in seasons when intellectual torpor and spiritual indifference prevailed in the University, in the Church, and in the nation at large.

What new error or heresy is it feared that Oxford will produce if conscience is unfettered? Is it feared that she will produce Roman Catholics? Is it feared that she will produce Free Thinkers? Do not the very facts which are cited by the advocates of the tests to scare us from emancipation prove conclusively that

the evils which it is said would arise from freedom, exist in their most dreaded form under the present system? And is it not among the clergy, who are doubly and trebly bound by tests, rather than among the less fettered laity that these evils arise?

It is not wonderful that this should be the case. By forcing a mass of questionable doctrine upon the now awakened consciences of men at an early period of life, you can hardly fail to produce in their minds a premature uneasiness and restlessness on these subjects. By tyrannizing over conscience you can hardly fail to arouse a rebellion against your tyranny which will probably be carried by the sense of wrong far beyond the bounds of rational resistance.

The test fails to promote, or rather tends to defeat, the object with which it was instituted. It is felt as a great grievance by a large number of persons. Can there be a more complete case in the eye of a statesman for remedial legislation?

We shall be told, perhaps, by a certain school among our opponents, that the Church guarantees to us the truth of the Articles, and absolves conscience from all need of inquiry, and from all risk of committing a sin by unhesitating acquiescence. We are bound at least to ask, What Church? If the visible Church, the patent fact is that even according to the estimate of high Anglicans, who exclude Protestants from the Church, and include only themselves, the Roman Catholics, and the Greeks, an overwhelming majority of the visible Church rejects the Thirty-nine Articles, and pronounces that they are not only not

pure truth, but fraught with deadly error. If the invisible Church, we are of course put to the inquiry, What the invisible Church is, and, further, how it came to be embodied in the Parliaments of Elizabeth and Charles II? If the national Church, we shall have to ask by what passage of Scripture, or by what principle of reason, authority is given to a mere political and geographical section of Christendom to bind and loose conscience by its decisions over a certain area, and to make that truth on one side of the Channel which, by an analogous authority, might be made falsehood on the other. The vision of Englishmen has been enlarged beyond the narrow island boundary by which it was confined in Tudor times; it takes in other Christian countries; and the claims of the Established Church of this island on our unquestioning allegiance are now judged, not by the tone of authority in which she prefers them, but by her position among the Churches of Christendom. Nor has history failed to do its part by uncrowning the despots of the past, and reducing to the stature of men, and men of very disputable character and wisdom, those half divine personages who could once impose themselves as the authorised exponents of divine truth on the reverence of a prostrate nation.

Parliament at all events has not regarded subscription to the Articles as a mere act of unreasoning submission to Church authority; for by a statute, of which the measure now sought would be merely an extension, it has done away with subscription at Matriculation and on taking the Bachelor's degree. The ground on which

this measure of concession received the support of several Conservatives was, that candidates for Matriculation or for the Bachelor's degree were too young to have satisfied their minds by study and inquiry as to the truth of the doctrines to which they were called upon to subscribe. People cannot be too young, too ill-informed, too deficient in intellectual or in the mature sense of responsibility for an act of mere submission to the authority of the Church. The argument used to justify the abolition of subscription to the Articles in this case applies equally to the cases of all persons who, whether from their youth or from the nature of their duties in life, have not had time or opportunity to master the enormous mass of controversial divinity which the Articles comprehend. But the acknowledgment of its validity by Parliament in any case shows that in the contemplation of the Legislature, the real imponent of these tests, subscription is not merely a blind act of submission, but an act of reason and conscience, only to be justified, or required, on reasonable and conscientious grounds.

The Articles themselves take the same view. They refer to Scripture as the ultimate standard of religious truth: and of course it must be, not the mere written or printed characters of the Bible, but Scripture read by the reasons and consciences of men. The singular document prefixed to the Articles, called 'His Majesty's Declaration,' will be found to look in the same direction. It sets forth indeed, in sufficiently strong terms, the right and duty of kings, as national popes, to order the consciences of their subjects and to keep

all men in the unity of the true (that is of the royal) religion. But it appeals distinctly, though incidentally, to a ground of acquiescence different from that of mere filial submission to authority, whether it be the authority of the Church embodied in Convocation, of the Church embodied in a Convocation of clerical dignitaries, or of the Church embodied in Parliament. "For the present, though some differences have been ill raised, yet we take comfort in this, that all clergymen within our realm have always *most willingly* subscribed to the Articles established; which is an argument to us, that they all *agree* in the true, usual, literal meaning of the said Articles; and that even in those curious points, in which the present differences lie, men of all sorts *take the Articles of the Church of England to be for them;* which is an argument again that none of them intend any desertion of the Articles established." This is not exactly an appeal to reason or conscience: perhaps some might think it an appeal to a motive of a very different kind. But it clearly implies that assent to the Articles on a ground distinct from that of mere submission to authority, is a matter of satisfaction to the imponent.

It is well known that casuistical expedients of various kinds have been invented to make the Articles easier of digestion to reluctant minds. The most singular of them, perhaps, looking to experience, is the attempt to construe these formularies as Articles of Peace. No party in the Church has taken advantage of such loopholes for an uneasy conscience more largely, or has stood more manifestly in need of them,

than those who are now most resolute in forcing the Articles in the most stringent sense on the consciences of others. For all are aware that those who are the great enemies of free inquiry in general were not long since, and indeed may be said still to be, the great friends of that particular kind of free inquiry which, when logically and boldly conducted, leads ultimately, and has already in many cases led, to a rejection of the Anglican Church in favour of the Church of Rome. It was to coerce this party, by precluding the evasive constructions under which they eluded the law, that the authorities of the University proposed, some time since, to ascertain, by a rigid interpretation, the meaning of subscription: and the proposal was resisted by the party on the rather ominous ground, that the University might be itself mistaken in the interpretation which it proposed to affix. But if these expedients are tendered to us as palliatives of our case, or put forward as an answer to our grievances, we must be permitted to say that liberty of prevarication is to honest men no liberty at all, and that the recognition of such subterfuges, (if they are recognized,) only proves that immediate emancipation is demanded in the interest of every cause which has not bid farewell to ordinary morality. The same thing may be said of all exhortations to put yourself, by an effort of moral compliancy, in the frame of mind in which the Articles will seem tolerably true. Such a process is simply an abandonment of truth: and would lead a man to acquiesce, not only in the Thirty-nine Articles, but in any kind of superstition.

The Petition before mentioned, points to the evil effect of the present system in producing a looseness of conscience and a habit of tampering with solemn obligations. Who can doubt that this is the case? And who can doubt that the sight of men subscribing to religious formularies under such circumstances, and with such suspicions attaching to their act, is much more calculated to spread infidelity, in the deepest and worst sense of the term, among those who witness it, than to confirm them in any kind of faith?

A petition was got up against Mr. Bouverie's Bill, and signed by upwards of a thousand Undergraduates, praying that no alteration might be made in the existing law. The advocates of the present system, both in Parliament and in the press, attached great importance to this document, as showing that a large number of those who had not yet taken the tests, looked forward to doing so, not only without any sense of hardship, but with entire satisfaction. Important the document unquestionably was. Judging from the regular course of study in this place, it may be very safely said, that of the undergraduates who signed the petition, the majority had not studied the formularies in question: some probably had not even read them through with attention, if they had read them through at all. Yet they were all ready to sign a petition praying that these formularies might continue to be imposed, not only on their own consciences, but on the reluctant consciences of others. Suppose this had taken place among the stu-

dents of some dissenting University, or in any community reputed heterodox, should we not have been called upon to mark the effects of a bad system in begetting want of reverence for conscience, and levity in matters of religious truth*?

A clerical member of the University suspected of heterodoxy may be called upon by the Vice-Chancellor to repeat his subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles†: and this instrument of moral torture has of late been brought into play. Nobody supposes that any object worthy the name of religious is gained by the proceeding. Nobody supposes that the suspected person is at all better affected to the doctrines of the Articles after repeating his subscription than he was before. Nobody feels that any further assurance of his orthodoxy has really been given to any human being. Persecution, and attempts to drive the supposed heretic from the University by insult and injustice, go on after the pretended act of satisfaction, just as they did before. One object only has been attained, the open degradation of an opponent. This interpretation, and this interpretation alone, is put upon the proceeding on all hands: and whether the feeling produced in the minds of the beholders be that of malignant exultation, or of generous disgust, the effect on the interests of religion is the same.

* For an account of this Petition and for the argument based on it, see the Bishop of Oxford's speech in the House of Lords, in the debate on the Petition for the Abolition of Tests, July 4, 1863.

† Whether it could be done in the case of a layman seems doubtful. The words of a penal Statute would of course be construed strictly.

These tests are the vestiges, the last lingering vestiges, of an age of religious tyranny and oppression of conscience—an age when the best of Christians and of citizens, guilty of no offence but that of loving the truth, and desiring to impart it to their brethren, were treated as felons, harassed, fined, thrust into noisome dungeons and kept there till they died, at the instigation of ecclesiastics who dishonoured the Christian name, and by the hands of politicians, who equally dishonoured it, and who in many cases had no convictions whatever of their own—when the eucharist itself, the bond of Christian love, was prostituted to the purposes of political hatred with the approbation of a so-called Christian clergy, though with a profanity worse, because deeper in its nature, and polluting holier things, than the impieties of the ignorant heathen—when, in Scotland, many a peasant, merely for worshipping God in the way he thought the best, was shot down by a godless soldiery hounded on by bishops styling themselves the successors of the Apostles—when Ireland was oppressed by a penal code which bribed the child to apostasy by enabling him, as a reward, to strip his father of his property, and not only of his inherited property, but of that which he might himself acquire—when immorality and infidelity went hand in hand with spiritual slavery, and, while Baxter and Calamy lay in prison for their convictions, obscene plays were being acted in the harem of a Defender of the Faith, who lived a careless infidel, mocking at morality and God, and who died a craven infidel, calling in his panic for the viaticum of

superstition. Is not that age, with all that belonged to it, numbered with the past? Are not its practices disclaimed even by those who have not yet eradicated its sentiments from their hearts? Have not all men capable of profiting by any experience whatever, profited by the experience which, recorded in characters more terrible than those of blood, tells us that conscience cannot be forced, that God will accept none but a free allegiance; and that reason, and reason alone, is our appointed instrument for bringing each other to the truth? Can any one imagine that the suppression of differences of opinion, which the great powers of the earth, seated on its most ancient and awful thrones, failed to effect with their united force, will be effected by a party born but yesterday, and still unsettled in its own opinions, with so miserable a fragment of that force as an academical test? Why should we, the great body of the English people, who have no interests to serve but those of truth and sincere religion, any longer oppress, vex, and harass the consciences of each other? Why should we thus aggravate the religious perplexities and distresses which are gathering fast enough around us all? If it is for a political object that we do this, how can true policy be divorced from justice? If it is for a religious object, how can religion consist with depravation of conscience? If it is for the sake of the clergy, will not a desire to see them really influential and truly useful as spiritual guides, lead us at once to take out of their hands these instruments of self-degradation, by the use of which they are alienating from them-

selves the moral sense as well as the intellects of men?

One remark more must be made before we leave this part of the subject. Political and academical tests, such as we seek to abolish, are totally different things from terms of spiritual communion or qualifications for spiritual office. This is the answer to those who are disposed to confront the advocates of political or academical emancipation with charges of laxity in doctrine or indifference to religious truth. It is not proposed to alter the Articles, or to relax in any way the canon of orthodox doctrine required by the Church, as a Church, either on the part of her communicants or on the part of her clergy. All that is proposed is to remove tests imposed by political power on candidates for literary and scientific degrees. It is the more necessary to insist on this, because the confusion of ideas against which the remark is intended to guard, seems to have found its way into the mind, or at least into the language, of a very eminent man. Mr. Gladstone is reported to have said in the debate on the petition, that "he could not conceive how, with a system of religious truth purporting to be revealed and essentially definite, you could separate the propagation of tests from the principle and maintenance of that religion." "It seemed to him like dividing the bone from the flesh, so that vitality itself must escape in the severance." And he went on to argue that as the Apostles' Creed, which was a primitive document, was in the nature of a test, tests must have been sanctioned by the

usage of the Primitive Church. Whether dogmatism and exclusiveness have their source in the writings of the Apostles, or whether they are not traceable rather to the Byzantine and Roman than to the Apostolic mind, is a question which we need not here discuss. Nor need we inquire whether there is anything on the face of the Apostles' Creed to show that it was intended to be used otherwise than as a summary of faith. If there were theological formularies equivalent to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Athanasian Creed in the days of the Apostles, it is certain that there were no political tests. Or rather there were political tests, which some of the Apostles and many of their followers were put to death for refusing to take.

The spiritual strictness of a Church indeed is likely to be rather in inverse than in direct proportion to the stringency of its political tests, and to the degree of support which it receives generally from political power. For such support is, and must be, purchased by corresponding concessions to the powers of the world: not only by making the Church a political tool in their hands, but by allowing them to use it as a cloak for their own moral and spiritual licence so long as they promote its apparent interests by oppressing and persecuting its opponents. It may safely be said that no Christian Church, we might almost say no heathen association which made any pretension to a bond of religious union, has ever been so loose with regard to spiritual requirements and terms of communion as the Church of England was in the

reign of Charles II, when, supported by the full power of a tyrannical government, she was allowed to multiply political tests in supreme scorn of conscience, and held Nonconformist ministers imprisoned in every gaol. To the period of intolerance and persecution naturally succeeded a period of general scepticism. During this period, was the eucharist, as a qualification for office, refused to scoffers at Christianity? And can we imagine a more deplorable or a more instructive union of political tyranny with spiritual laxity, than the administration of the eucharist to an unbeliever as a qualification for office would afford? Bolingbroke, at once an infidel and a persecutor of Nonconformists, was in fact the lay head of the Church in his day, and might have communicated, if he deigned to communicate, on any terms he pleased: and generally speaking, any one who will look over the history of an established Church will see that she has seldom been independent enough to ask what were the religious convictions or what was the character of her political chief. The same thing may be said, with at least equal force, of the Churches established by the State in Roman Catholic countries. The Church of the Dragonades was the Church of Dubois; and it formed at once the terror of sincere Nonconformity, and the decent veil of royal and aristocratic lust. Men of the world, in fact, have found by experience that a Church supported by political power, and dependent on that support, is the best antidote to the active influence of religion, which they choose to regard as a dangerous and disturbing element in

society; and in paying their homage and lending their protection to a state religion, whether it be that of Jupiter or that of the Anglican Church, they are actuated partly by this view, and partly by the belief that the clergy are useful as a police. The kingdom of the Author of Christianity, after all, is not a kingdom of this world; nor can the kingdoms of this world be made those of the Author of Christianity by the process of political legislation, though they may, and, as we believe, will be in the end, by a process of religious conversion.

And so, on the other hand, it must not be supposed that those who most desire the removal of these tests, and of all interference of political power with conscience, seek to impugn, in any way, the spiritual integrity of the Anglican Church, or to force her to abandon anything which she holds to be an essential part of her proper duty as the guardian of religious truth. They may hope—some of them certainly do hope—that when, the hand of political power being withdrawn, the Churches of Christendom cease to be divided by political and social barriers from each other, and to be shut up each in the legal creeds and formularies imposed on it by the State, charity and the sense of a common life derived from the same sources and producing essentially the same fruits, will work their way through the hard integument of exclusive dogma in which each State Church is cased: and that a reconciliation, if not a reunion, of Christendom, will ultimately take place. But they expect this result from conscience, reason and Christian sympathy, not from

political compromise: and they are as far as possible from wishing to liberalize any Church by legislative action—above all by the action of a Parliament which has lost the last vestige of a title to legislate in matters of religion—or to force any Church to surrender for the convenience of secular interests any portion of what it deems the truth.

We now come to the distinct question as to the opening of the Universities to Dissenters. Dissenters or Nonconformists they shall be called here, to avoid multiplying issues. But if liberty of conscience be the principle of English society, the proper name of these communities is not Dissenters but Free Churches.

The relations between Church and State, and the rights as citizens of persons not belonging to the Anglican Church, are a subject on which it has become necessary that statesmen, if they would be worthy of the name, should at least have some definite principle distinctly before their minds. In the times of the Tudors, when the relations between Church and State were settled, and in the time of Charles II, when that settlement was restored, it was assumed that Church and State were one, and that conformity and citizenship were coextensive: nor did the aristocratic revolution which is associated with the name of William III. alter the principle, although it qualified the practical rigour of intolerance; and although the State, led by political exigencies, to which its so-called religious principles invariably yield, accepted, at the union with Scotland, the absurd and fundamentally sceptical position of

establishing one religion on the North, and another on the South of the Tweed. The Nonconformists were persecuted under the Tudors and the Stuarts: under William and his successors they were tolerated; and the measure of toleration was enlarged as they grew in numbers and in influence, and as, by the softening influence of time on religious antipathies, and by the gradual diffusion of free thought in Europe, their enemies, the fanatical clergy, lost hold on the power of the State. But under neither dynasty were they regarded as entitled to the rights of citizens, or as placed in any other than a penal condition, the penalties of which the State, out of mercy or policy, was pleased to mitigate or suspend. At the same time it must be remembered, that no statesman of the Tudor age, or even of that which succeeded the Tudors, looked upon this state of things as perpetual, or supposed that a large part of the nation would always remain politically and socially cut off, as Nonconformists, from the rest, deprived wholly or in part of the privileges of citizens, and therefore malcontent and disaffected. These politicians were in fact misled, in a great measure, by their passionate desire to produce perfect national unity, and their inability to understand that perfect national unity might exist notwithstanding diversities in religion. The complete identity of Church and State, of churchman and citizen, which they regarded and propounded as the ideal polity, they also fully expected to realise in fact. They more or less definitely looked upon Nonconformity as a transient malady, which would disappear in the end, provided

the rulers of the State persevered in the system of encouraging the Established Church and discouraging all others. Such was their expectation even with regard to Ireland, where their theory and the ecclesiastical law in which it was embodied were most signally and most obstinately confronted by adverse facts. What were their ideas as to the relations of the State Church of England to the other Churches of Christendom; whether they expected that the whole Christian world would in the end be converted to the doctrines of the Thirty-nine Articles, the last revision of the Prayer Book, and the Homilies, or whether they were content that each Christian nation should continue to have its own national religion, and consequently its own national God, after the fashion of polytheistic antiquity, it would probably be difficult to determine. They were not men of high spiritual aspirations or of very ample vision in the spiritual sphere: and their chief aim was the complete subordination of the people to the purposes of the government, and the consolidation of a great and compact power. When a philosophical mind undertook to supply a religious basis to their political theories, the result was such as the concluding books of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity display.

It is now for statesmen to determine whether the experience of three centuries is not conclusive as to the vanity of these expectations: whether there remains any ground whatever for hoping that Nonconformity will cease, and that national unity will be brought about by the adherence of all citizens to the Anglican religion. In forming their opinion they will consider

not only the relative numbers of Churchmen and Nonconformists, Protestant or Catholic, at the present day, but the relative increase of their numbers respectively since the foundation of the Established Church. They will balance not only the numbers or the numerical increase, but the amount of religious energy displayed by those who found and maintain free Churches by their own efforts and at their own cost, notwithstanding political penalties or disadvantages, compared with the amount displayed by adherence to a Church endowed and encouraged by the State. They will be careful, especially with regard to the people of the rural districts, to distinguish between mere negative acquiescence, the result of ignorance or custom, and positive conviction. They will also distinguish the results of the social and educational efforts which the clergy have made of late years, and in which they have been supported by the wealth and influence of the Anglican upper classes, from a renewed growth of Anglican doctrines in the minds of the people. They will examine the internal condition of the Anglican Church itself, and mark what is the degree of unity which it enjoys, or is likely, to all appearances, to enjoy; and whether its distinctive tenets really command the allegiance of its most powerful and influential minds. Finally, they will look abroad over Christendom, with the destinies of which it can scarcely be supposed that the destinies of any Christian nation are wholly unconnected, and see whether men are generally more inclined to make conscience bow before established formularies, to sacrifice truth to political convenience,

or to reverence forms of religion imposed by the authority of kings. They will remember that in every nation of Europe where the powers of government were such as to lead rulers into arbitrary courses, the same attempt has been made to produce perfect unity in religion by the enforcement of conformity: and their own observation will tell them whether in every country of Europe the attempt has not decisively failed.

If they are brought to the conclusion that to produce national unity according to the Tudor plan, by forcing or inducing all the people to profess the State religion, has been proved to be hopeless, it only remains for them to seek the same end in another way, by recognizing perfect liberty of conscience, by granting to all citizens the full privilege of citizenship, by finally renouncing on the part of the government pretensions which have led to nothing but disaster, and placing the State in what experience has shewn to be its true position as the equal guardian of the secular rights and interests of all. If the old principle has failed, it ought, by all the rules of real statesmanship, to be frankly abandoned, and the new and sounder principle on which society is henceforth to stand ought to be cordially embraced. The advantages which practical wisdom, so called, sees in gradual, niggardly, and extorted concession, are surely more than countervailed to the true statesman's eye by the bitterness of the strife, the long legacy of faction, the loss of the gratitude and harmony which attend a freely bestowed boon, the waste, in a barren and useless struggle, of power which might be expended in promoting the

general good. Toleration, which treated the Nonconformist half as a criminal, half as a citizen, was manifestly a transition state. The day of toleration is now past, the day of equality is come. Its coming will make us,—its approach has already begun to make us,—a more united, a more loyal, a more prosperous, and a more religious nation.

If the principle of religious equality is to be embraced, and all loyal citizens, whatever their religious creed, are to be accepted as in the full sense members of the nation, it would seem to follow as a matter of right and of course that they must all be admitted on equal terms to every national institution, and among others, to the national Universities. You may try to temper the Nonconformist's exercise of his right, in the first instance at least, so as not to give an unnecessary shock to interests or sentiments which have grown up under the Tudor system. But you cannot deprive him of his right, without doing that which is the most unstatesmanlike of all things, an act of palpable injustice.

The only answer, apparently, that can be made to this claim of right is, that the Universities belong, not to the nation, but to the Anglican Church. And this, though it is not expressly stated, is constantly suggested or implied in the reasonings of the clerical party. It is plainly suggested in the Petition before mentioned as having been presented by the clerical party in the University against Mr. Bouverie's Bill.

Legally, the Universities are lay corporations. They are represented by Burgesses in the National Legis-

lature. They are visited by the Crown in the Court of Queen's Bench. Their Chancellors may be and in modern times always have been laymen. Holy Orders are not required as a qualification for admission to their governing bodies or for any office in them, excepting those the holders of which must have taken Theological degrees.

The same is in truth the case in a historical point of view. No doubt the Universities in the middle ages had something of an ecclesiastical character. They were founded, or their foundation was confirmed, under Papal bulls, and the visitatorial power over them was the subject of contention between diocesans, metropolitans, and popes. In the proclamations of mediæval kings, regulating the relations between the students and the citizens of Oxford, the citizens as a body are sometimes called *Laici*, in contradistinction to the *Scholares*, who are assumed to be clerks. But all intellectual institutions in the middle ages were ecclesiastical. Society was in those times divided into the military class, the peasantry, the burghers, and the clergy: and the clergy comprehended not only those who were devoted to the cure of souls, but all who professed learning of any kind and wrought with the brain not with the hand, —the lawyer and the physician, the man of letters and the man of science, even the architect and the engineer. Wykeham the founder of New College was a bishop, and held a mass of clerical preferment: but he passed the early part of his life as an architect, and the latter part as a diplomatist and

statesman. A clergyman in the modern sense of the term, as one devoted to pastoral duties or to theological study, he never was. And if we go deeper, and inquire to which of the two antagonistic elements of mediæval intellect the Universities belonged, to that which was sacerdotal and reactionary or to that which was scientific and progressive, we shall find the answer embodied in some of the most interesting facts of mediæval history. The Universities were the very centres of science and of progress: to the sacerdotal and reactionary party they were the objects of deserved suspicion. In them, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, commenced the movement which issued at last in the great intellectual revolution of the sixteenth, called by the name, which, considering the variety of its effects, is inadequate, of the Protestant Reformation. To gain control over the seats of mental independence, the Dominicans and Franciscans threw themselves into the Universities in the thirteenth century, as the Jesuits threw themselves into the intellectual world in the sixteenth *. The most characteristic, as well as the most illustrious figures in the history of Oxford before the sixteenth century are Roger Bacon and Wycliffe: both of whom under the strictly clerical dominion to which we have since become subject, have been regarded, we may say, with something of Dominican aversion †. The

* They fell themselves, in some cases, notably in the case of Roger Bacon, under the influence which it was their mission to combat.

† Bacon perhaps rather in the person of his more illustrious namesake than his own.

founder of our most ancient college, and the most ancient of all colleges, Walter de Merton, was the friend of Robert Grosteste, the liberal Bishop of Lincoln, whose antagonism to the Roman and sacerdotal party gave rise to the statement, whether literally true or not, that he died under excommunication,—to Rome an ecclesiastical castaway, to English liberals a saint. And to the reforming party of the reign of Henry III, to which both belonged, we owe not only the first loosening of the Roman yoke, but, in no small degree, our Parliamentary institutions, the offspring of a spirit of political inquiry which was fostered, together with the spirit of philosophic and scientific inquiry, in the Universities, and found its expression in the Latin songs of the student as well as in the deeds of De Montfort and his companions in arms. Merton excluded monks from his college: and the monks of those days were, in point of reactionary spirit, the High Church clergy of these. His Fellows were clerks, no doubt, but seculars, not regulars: and the tendency of his regulations was to create a literary not a sacerdotal institution. This object was fulfilled; for his college produced Wycliffe, at once one of the most eminent of the school philosophers and the first great adversary of the sacerdotal power.

The present ascendancy of the clergy, from which the notion that the Universities are ecclesiastical institutions arises, is due to a combination of historical accidents. The Fellows of colleges being clerks, the framers of the college statutes in the middle ages,

enjoined their Fellows, generally speaking, to take Holy Orders by a certain time; and as the statutes were never revised, these ordinances remained in force after the Reformation, when the real signification of taking orders had been greatly altered, and every ordained person was in fact expressly consecrated to the pastoral cure of souls *. At the same time, the colleges having grown in number and wealth, while the independent halls for students fell into decay, they absorbed the University; and thus rules and restrictions intended only for private foundations were imposed, with the clerical character which the observance of them produced, on the public institution. As a natural consequence, lay studies and professions gradually took their departure from the University; and left clerical studies, of which that of the learned languages was the chief, exclusively in possession. This result, no doubt, was fully justified in the special case of Medicine and Surgery, by the necessity of resorting to the great London hospitals; and in the special case of Pleading and Conveyancing, by the necessity of being initiated into the technical mysteries of pleaders' and conveyancers' chambers, which were to be found only in the

* Persons ordained as priests are specially exhorted in the Ordination Service to give themselves to reading and learning the Scriptures, and "to forsake and put aside (as much as they may) all worldly cares and *studies*." And they pledge themselves in the same service, "to be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same; laying aside the study of the world and the flesh." How can men under this pledge claim the direction of secular studies, or the government of a University where such studies are pursued?

neighbourhood of the courts of law; but in the case of all the other studies, including the studies preliminary to medicine, and the principles of jurisprudence, it was a banishment of learning and science from their natural home. Law Degrees were still required for Doctors Commons, and a premium on graduation at the University, in the shape of a remission of the number of law terms to be kept by the student, was formerly given at the Inns of Court; but these privileges have been recently lost, and it is to be feared that lawyers will be more than ever drawn away from the University, and that we shall become more clerical than ever; unless the increase of the number of lay fellowships, under the ordinances of the University Commission, should supply a compensating attraction. University degrees being generally, and till of late years almost universally, required by bishops as a qualification for Holy Orders, the clergy continued to graduate at Oxford and Cambridge; and by a calamitous relaxation of the University statutes respecting residence, introduced at a period of general looseness, through an indiscriminate exercise of the Chancellor's dispensing power, they were enabled to proceed to the Master's degree without residing, and thus to form a Convocation of country clergymen, to whose dominion the University has long been absolutely subject. Nor was it only under the intellectual dominion of the clergy that Oxford fell: it fell also under their political dominion, and that of the political party with which they were allied. In the time of James I. a national University became the

centre of a great conspiracy against the civil as well as the religious liberties of the nation of which Charles and Laud stand in history as the joint chiefs; and this conspiracy was perpetuated, in a less noble form, after the Revolution of 1688, by the Jacobite parsons of Oxford common rooms, who by their intrigues, and still more by the doctrines which they infused into their pupils, kept alive during a century the evils of a disputed succession, and helped to produce, though they refrained from personally sharing, two insurrections in favour of the house of Stuart, which cost blood more generous than their own. Under this twofold tyranny political as well as religious tests were formerly imposed by the reactionary party, on candidates for degrees. About 1622, a preacher named Knight having thrown out some intimation that subjects oppressed by their prince on account of religion might defend themselves by arms, the University not only censured him, but pronounced a solemn decree that it is in no case lawful for subjects to make use of force against their princes, nor to appear offensively or defensively in the field against them. All persons promoted to degrees were required to subscribe to this, and to take an oath that they not only at present detested the opposite opinion, but would at no future time entertain it. "A ludicrous display," remarks Hallam, "of the folly and despotic spirit of learned academies." A ludicrous and melancholy display, he should rather have said, of the degraded state into which learned academies fall, when, by a series of unfortunate accidents, they are diverted from the

purposes of learning, and made slaves to the clerical profession and its political allies.

Even supposing that the Universities were legally and historically the property of the national Church, the property of the national Church, as distinguished from its spiritual organisation and attributes, is the property of the nation; and the Legislature is not only entitled, but bound to deal with it, and every part of it, for the good of the whole community. But, if the foregoing view of the facts is correct, no real change of destination is required; no appropriation having taken place but by accident, and accident that carries with it nothing legally, historically or morally entitled to any respect whatever.

A claim of right, once admitted, absolutely rules this and all political questions, leaving nothing open to debate but the mode in which the right may be best conceded and enjoyed with least detriment to the rights of others. Justice is expediency in short hand. The advantages however which would accrue to the State by the admission of all its members, without distinction of religious opinions, to the national Universities are manifest, and may be summed up in a few words; it being premised that we are speaking at present of the University, not of the Colleges, which stand on a somewhat different footing, so that their case will require some separate remarks.

This measure would bring a body of Englishmen who have now become powerful and influential, under the higher culture, which has its seat in the Universities, and from which they have been hitherto excluded,

to the detriment of their own interests and no less to the detriment of the State in which they exercise social and political power. It would restore the unity of the nation in the matter of high education, by bringing the youth of the upper classes, whether belonging to the landed gentry, who are mostly Anglicans, or to the manufacturing and agricultural part of the community, who are less within the Anglican pale, to a common place of training, where they would imbibe common ideas, be socially as well as intellectually fused, and learn to understand each other: an advantage the magnitude of which any one may measure by considering how sharp has hitherto been the social and political division between those bred at Oxford and Cambridge, and those bred elsewhere. And further, it would enable the Universities to become the centres of the educational system in a country where large masses of the people, it may almost be said whole districts, are conscientious and for the most part hereditary Dissenters from the Anglican Church, and will not give their confidence to any institution which is administered exclusively in her interest. The expense of a University education, both in money and time, is probably too great to admit of our reckoning on so large an addition as many expect to the number of the resident students, though their number will no doubt be increased both by the removal of religious disabilities, and by the admission of more useful and popular subjects into the course of academical education. But there is no reason why Oxford and Cambridge should not by their action in the way of examining and visiting, as well as by

furnishing masters, books and other instruments of education, exercise a most beneficial influence over the other places of education, especially those of the different social strata, ranging from the solicitor or engineer to the small tradesman, which are embraced in the wide term middle class. This has indeed already been perceived by the Universities themselves, and the idea has been acted on, though, as some think, rather crudely and hastily, by the institution of the Middle-Class Examinations; but religious difficulties have already been encountered, though, the examinations being perfectly voluntary, no candidates were likely to offer themselves whose parents or schoolmasters were very strict Dissenters, and decidedly objected to placing education under the influence of an Anglican institution. The late Education Commissioners, again, suggested in their report, that the Universities should grant certificates to schoolmasters, and that they should undertake the inspection and examination of the classical endowed schools: and possibly it may hereafter be thought, that if some of our sinecure Fellowships were charged with some duties of this kind they would be not less valuable to the holders, and more useful to the State. Supposing any central system of inspection to be desirable, a far better, more acceptable, and more trusted centre may be found in Universities independent of political party than in an office connected with the executive power. But to exercise these national functions, and still more to be trusted with national authority to exercise them, Oxford and Cambridge must become the Universities of the whole nation, and it must be clearly

established, in a way in which nothing but their complete emancipation from Anglican tests will establish it, that their proper duty is the promotion of national learning and education, not the propagation of Anglican opinions.

Whatever may be thought by the High Church clergy, to whom the extirpation of Dissent always seems not only desirable but near, a statesman, looking to the fact that the teachers and guides of large masses of the people are, and to all appearances must long continue to be, Nonconformists, will think it an object that those who exercise such an influence in the community should be trained, by a superior education and an enlarged intellectual intercourse, to exercise it, as far as possible, in an enlightened and liberal way. A high Anglican journal, and one not only very able, but very moderate and charitable in its general tone, reviewing the other day a book by an eminent Nonconformist, acknowledged the substantial merits of the work, but concluded by remarking, as a curious fact, that 'no Dissenter could write like a gentleman.' Few things are more irritating than to hear those who maintain an oppressive system in their own interest taunting the oppressed with defects which are the consequences of the oppression. The Irish peasant, to complete the wretchedness of his lot, is complacently pronounced a being of degraded nature, by those whose ruthless misgovernment and wicked laws have been almost the sole cause of his degradation. The Dissenter is held up to derision for his want of cultivation by those who are all the time engaging the holders of political power

by the bribe of Church support, to exclude him, as a social Pariah, from the institutions where alone the highest cultivation can be obtained. The remark, however, though made by those who ought to be somewhat ashamed to make it, is not without foundation. The writings and preachings of the Nonconformists have been the channels of spiritual life to great masses of the English people: they have even been almost the sole support of religion in England at times when, as during a great part of the last century, the Establishment, lethargic from overendowment, filled with unworthy ministers by family patronage, and enslaved to the purposes of worldly politicians, lay inert and helpless in face of spreading scepticism and dominant vice*. But, generally speaking, they unquestionably show, by defects of style which their Anglican critic rather severely describes as an inability to write like a gentleman, and perhaps by

* "In the reign of George the First," says a highly conservative as well as a very eminent historian, "the reflecting few could perceive that the Church of England, though pure as ever in doctrine, was impaired in energy, and must have either help or opposition to stir it. That impulse was in a great measure given by the Methodists. . . . . We may question now whether in virtue, in piety, in usefulness, any Church of modern times could equal ours. Nor let any false shame hinder us from owning, that though other causes also were at work, it is to the Methodists that great part of the merit is due. Whilst therefore we trace their early enthusiasm and perverted views, and the mischief which these have undoubtedly caused, as well as the evils of the present separation, let us never forget or deny the countervailing advantage." (Lord Mahon's Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 373, 4.) If this be true, is the Church of England entitled to exclude Methodists from the Universities on high grounds of religious superiority? Is the flame that was rekindled so pure, the lamp at which it was rekindled so impure?

some defects deeper than those of style, that the system of academical exclusion has not failed to produce its natural effects; and that emancipation would be a great and certain benefit to the State, inasmuch as it would be productive of intellectual improvement among a body of men who, as was before said, must be expected long to remain the guides and teachers of a great part of the people.

The removal of sectarian antipathy will seem an advantage only to those to whom sectarian antipathy seems an evil, who recognize the essential unity of the Christian character in different sects and under different dogmatic systems, and who think it a calamity that men whose virtues are the same should be prevented by their dogmatic differences, or rather by the dogmatic differences of their clergy, from heartily working together in all things for the common good. This view of the matter, it may be said without offence, is more likely to be taken by a Christian statesman, on whose mind the identity of the religious character in all good men is constantly impressed by his daily experience of dealings with men of different creeds, than by the ecclesiastic, bound almost in honour to maintain the close connection of practical excellence with an exclusive system of speculative dogma, and little disturbed probably in his theoretical allegiance to this conviction by actual contact with the virtues of Dissent. But to those who do take it, nothing can appear more desirable than the mixture of members of different sects in youth, when the heart is open, when conscientious difference of opinion is still an object

of generous respect rather than of bigoted or politic aversion, and when personal sympathy and daily companionship are likely to make short work with any formularies, however consecrated, which stand in the way of friendship. And if under these harmonizing influences not only sectarian antipathy should in some measure disappear—not only men now fellow-citizens in name, should, from having been members of the same University, become fellow-citizens indeed—but the value attached to dogma itself should decline, compared with the value attached to a Christian character and a Christian life, some might bewail the falling bulwarks of the faith, but others, as we before intimated, would hail an approach, however slight, towards the reconciliation of the English Churches, and, more remotely, towards the reconciliation of Christendom.

It is suggested, and even Mr. Gladstone seemed inclined to countenance the belief, that if the Universities were thrown open to Dissenters, Churchmen would no longer resort to them; and that, consequently, by such a measure, the interests of the many would be sacrificed to those of the few. The interests of the many ought to be sacrificed to those of the few, if the few have a right to come and the many have no right to shut them out. No such effect, however, has been produced by the admission of Dissenters as undergraduates, even into the colleges. It has not been produced even by the admission of Roman Catholics, whose errors are regarded by the bulk of the community as the most pernicious, and whose powers of proselytism are always supposed to be such

as no truth, when brought into contact with them, can withstand. It has not been produced by the removal of religious restrictions in the case of the Universities of Scotland, though the Presbyterians of the Scotch Establishment are as rigorously attached to orthodoxy as the Anglicans, whether they are equally fortunate in possessing it or not.

While people are taught by their spiritual instructors that exclusiveness is characteristic of a Christian, and while their exclusiveness is to be displayed only at the cost of others, it is very likely that they will be, or at least affect to be, exclusive: but if the question were whether they should exclude their own children from the benefit of a University education rather than allow them to come into contact with fellow students and teachers of a different communion from themselves, it may be doubted whether a single parent would consent to keep his son away. Traditional bugbears which pass for excellent arguments while the interests of the Nonconformists only are affected, would then be subjected to the keen scrutiny of self-interest, or the still keener scrutiny of parental ambition. It would soon be discovered that there was no more danger in listening to Faraday at Oxford, than in listening to him in London; and that if the sons who are in the civil service, or in the army, who are walking the hospital, or articled to a solicitor, may be allowed to take their chance in a world full of heretics, without any dereliction of religious principle on the part of their parents, or serious danger to their own faith, the son who is at the University might be allowed to

do the same. Even the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland, whose influence over the people is far greater than that of the clergy of the Church of England, find it impossible to restrain their flock from accepting the education offered them in Government schools, or even the advantages doled out to them with a sparing and somewhat humiliating hand in the University of Dublin.

There is probably no Dissenter, perhaps no Papist, whose name has of late scattered such terror through the religious world as those of the Authors of *Essays and Reviews*. Yet Rugby is overflowing, and Balliol is overflowing. You cannot find admission to either without giving several years' notice; at Balliol not without passing a severe and virtually competitive examination. People are willing enough to denounce, perhaps even to persecute: but they are not willing, nor will they ever be willing, to forego the benefit of the best education for their children.

We may be allowed, without imputing any improper motives, to think that social contempt for the Dissenters mingles in some degree with the fear of religious contagion. How many fathers would withdraw their sons from the society of men of rank of a different persuasion from their own? How many fathers would think that the presence of such persons impaired the purity of the atmosphere in a place of education, or in any other place? It is an easy thing to stigmatize, and exclude from the path of intellectual ambition, a methodist preacher's son. But it is not so easy to carry the

principle which alone will justify you in doing this consistently through all your relations with a world in which the great and powerful are not all upon your side *.

The greatest caution and tenderness should obviously be used in breaking up, even for the ultimate advantage of religion itself, an existing system of religious education: and if such would be the effect of admitting Dissenters to the Universities, we should be entitled, not indeed to repudiate their just claim, but to ask for the utmost patience and forbearance at their hands. But the truth is that, so far as the University, as distinguished from the Colleges, is concerned, no religious system really exists. The tests, which are now abolished in the case of students, were the only religious system. The discipline of the University is merely a matter of police, or at most of ordinary morality. As a consequence of the abolition of tests, the theological part of the University Examinations is dispensed with in the case of Dissenters. Even when it was exacted of all, to call it part of a religious system would have been to identify theology with religion, whereas any crammer, or any one who had been crammed, could have borne witness that they

* The argument that the admission of Dissenters to a place of education would render it unfit for the use of the orthodox, when employed against Mr. Bouverie's Bill, received the sanction of the First Minister, who was rewarded for this liberal sentiment with a chorus of liberal applause. The same statesman went rather out of his way to show his sympathy with prize-fighting: and no one will say that his conduct in the two cases was otherwise than consistent.

were easily separated from each other; while at Cambridge the theological element, so much prized at Oxford, was actually left out of the Examinations without producing any perceptible inferiority in the religious character of Cambridge men. Attendance at the University sermons is perhaps supposed in theory to be universal. In practice it would probably be just the same after the admission of Dissenters to degrees as it is at present.

Some persons are, it is believed, inclined to attach value to the testimony which under the system of exclusion the University is supposed to render to religious truth. Religious truth will not accept the testimony of injustice; and this testimony, if we look to facts instead of fiction, will prove to be, at bottom, that of Queen Elizabeth and her favourite the Earl of Leicester, or at best that of Archbishop Laud,—a testimony with which religion need not fear to part, so long as she retains that of one simple mind or one pure heart. But the truth is, this testimony, and the 'principle' which is supposed to be involved in it, were destroyed by the Acts of Parliament which admitted Dissenters to the Bachelor's degree at Oxford, and to the Master's degree at Cambridge, without its being perceived by anybody that religion rested on a less secure foundation than before. Upon every concession which the Legislature has made during the last hundred years, by the removal of religious disabilities, to the claims of conscience and of justice, the immediate ruin of religion has been foretold, and the wrath of Heaven has been denounced against the

nation if it ceased to confine all rights, honours, and emoluments to the members of a privileged Church. Those who utter these predictions must be content, like other people, to have their speculations controlled by experience. And experience, now twenty times repeated, proves that there is no truth in what they say, and that God is not a God of injustice but of justice.

It is alleged that the Dissenters themselves do not wish to come to the University, and that, if its doors were thrown open to them, they would refuse to enter; so that we are officiously pleading the cause of clients who do not desire our advocacy. Granting this to be the fact, the answer would be something like that which is given to those who contend that slaves ought not to be emancipated, because they are contented with their degraded lot. If the system of exclusion has rendered a number of people, and people of wealth and influence, indifferent to high culture and intellectual privileges, its operation must have been mischievous indeed. However, it remains to be seen whether it is the fact that Dissenters do not wish to come to the Universities. Are they indifferent to social position as well as to intellectual cultivation? At all events let the door be opened to them. If they come, the argument is answered. If they do not come, a grievance is removed, and no harm is done.

It is true, but few Dissenters have as yet taken advantage of the Acts of Parliament which permit them to come to the Universities as students, while

they are still debarred at Oxford from taking the higher degrees, and at Cambridge from becoming members of the Senate. But though they will not come while they are thus kept on a footing of inferiority and treated as objects of legislative suspicion, it by no means follows that they will not come if they are placed on a footing of equality, and frankly admitted to the full privileges of the place. The law which excludes them from the governing body of the University is an indication, or rather an open declaration, that the institution is to be administered not impartially, but in the interests of their religious opponents. The governing bodies of the Colleges are Anglican; and, as the Masters of Private Halls must be members of Convocation, no Dissenter can open a Private Hall.

We must not be too extreme to mark the inconsistencies of those who are defending a state of things which is dear to them, but which is not easily defended, and who take up in haste whatever arguments come first to hand. We are told that it is of no use to advocate the admission of Dissenters, since they would not come to the Universities if they were permitted; and, in the same breath, we are told that they would come in with a flood, fill the governing body of the University, and commence a course of legislation hostile to the interests of the Church of England. Here, again, experience allays our fears. The House of Commons has been thrown open to "persons of divergent convictions, and persons of no conviction at all." As it represents Scotland and Ireland, as well

as England, a much larger proportion of members not belonging to the Church of England has been introduced into it than would within any calculable period be introduced into the Convocation of an English University. Yet it is so far from being 'unchristianized,' or rendered hostile to Anglican interests, that a motion for inquiry into the case of the Irish Establishment, the most portentous monument of intolerance in Christendom, can scarcely obtain a respectful hearing. A legislative body, whether political or academical, drawn from the upper classes of England, will represent, probably it will only too faithfully represent, the sentiments, tone, and interests, of its class. That there may be a small minority of the other way of thinking, makes no difference in the practical result. In the case of an academical Convocation, it is peculiarly absurd to suppose that the majority would pass measures calculated not only to undermine and discredit their own religion, but to drive away from their precincts the class to their connection with which the Universities owe their position, or rather their existence. What measures of the kind can any one seriously apprehend, or even picture to himself in imagination? Convocation, when thrown open, will simply be a section of English society; and will exhibit the prevailing sentiments of that society in its character and acts. If English society ever undergoes a great change, and becomes either more mediæval and sacerdotal, or more modern and liberal, in its sentiments, than it is at present, Convocation will undergo a corresponding change. Of this each

party must be prepared to take its chance; unless either party thinks itself entitled and empowered to rule the whole course of the world entirely at its own discretion. There are things of more importance to religion and to the Anglican Church than the government of the University, which nevertheless are, and must be, left with resignation to the natural current of events. We are frequently told, when a question arises concerning the Crown Professorships, that if a democratic leader, hostile to Anglicanism, should rise to power, and become First Minister, he will have the appointment of the Crown Professors. No doubt he will; and he will also have the appointment of the Bishops.

The Nonconformists will, so far as it is possible to foresee, be a very small element in the University: and common sense tells us that the smaller element is more likely to be itself absorbed and assimilated, than to absorb and assimilate the larger; especially as the larger will have the influence of wealth and rank mainly on its side. The conversion of Dissenters to the Anglican Church is little to be desired by those who have not been able to convince themselves, that, in the great schism of Christendom, truth remained entire with any one of the divided Churches; and who, consequently, look less for the triumph of any one of the parts than for the reconciliation of the whole. But if any conversions take place, they are more likely to be those of Dissenters to Anglicanism, than of Anglicans to Dissent. The fact is, however, that of all the dangers which beset society, this of conversion

is probably the least to be dreaded: for the number of men in any position, who take a sufficient interest in religion, to attempt to make proselytes among those with whom they associate, is not large: and the number of students who take a sufficient interest in religion to attempt to make proselytes among their fellow students, may safely be said to be very small. How many instances have occurred of fellow students at the Inns of Court, fellow clerks in public offices, officers in the same regiment, or men brought together in any other way at the age of undergraduates, who have converted each other? An Anglican parent might deem himself fortunate if he could be half as sure that his sons would not be inoculated at college with the vice of gambling, as he might be that they would not be inoculated with what all but the most rigid dogmatists must allow to be the less pernicious errors of Dissent.

If religious scepticism is abroad in English society, it will find its way into Oxford and Cambridge, as well as into other places. There is no help for this, unless we think that we can suspend the Universities in a vacuum, or carry them back by enchantment into the middle ages: and even if we were in the middle ages, we should find that irrational dogmatism would always cast its shadow of doubt. The truth is, that scepticism is already here, and in an aggravated form. It is here because it is everywhere, both in England and in other countries, owing to the decay of State Creeds, which, not being true, and being no longer upheld by sufficient power, are falling into ruin and

leaving nations, whose religious thought they have long paralyzed, weltering in perplexity and distress. It is here in an aggravated form, both in the way of positive antagonism to religion and mere disbelief, as the natural consequence of the reaction following on the great attempt to restore priestly power, and to resuscitate the religion of the middle ages, of which Oxford was recently the scene, and which again was owing to the ascendancy of the clergy and the predominance of clerical objects in the University. So far from its being likely to be increased by the admission of Dissenters, it is likely to be diminished; since the Free Churches, not being fast bound by Tudor formularies, have, in spite of their too narrow sectarianism, enjoyed comparative liberty of thought, and have in some degree prepared themselves for difficulties which come upon the Established Church like a sudden avalanche, scattering confusion and dismay: besides which, the very sense of freedom is a source of assurance and tranquillity compared with the disquietude which arises among the believers in a false authority when they once begin to perceive that it is false. The evil will be still further diminished by any measure which tends to make the element of general learning and education paramount over the clerical element in the University, and thus to render us less exposed to the special convulsions and catastrophes which the clerical element is undergoing, and is likely, to all appearances, for some time to undergo.

The Protestant Nonconformists, or a part of them, have on more than one occasion disgraced themselves,

and justified, so far as any conduct of theirs could justify, the acts of their oppressors, by supporting the fanatical members of the Established Church in the persecution of Roman Catholics: and there seems some reason to apprehend that an appeal made to their fears of Popery by the advocates of exclusion might not be ineffective in detaching Nonconformists from the side of University Emancipation. There may have been some excuse for the No-Popery cry in the times when the Papists in England formed with those on the Continent a great and formidable conspiracy, having the mighty monarchies of the house of Austria for its centre, against the civil and religious liberty of all Protestant nations. There can be no excuse for it now, when even Protestant statesmen, if strongly conservative, are in alarm lest the fall of the once great Theocracy should be too sudden, and take the communities which have been organized under and around it unprepared. The momentary appearance of reviving life which Roman Catholicism has exhibited in this country, in the shape of the Oxford conversions, and which has renewed our old alarms, is due not to any return of vital energy into the withered frame of the Roman Catholic Church itself, but to the sacerdotal and sacramental element, essentially Roman, which was retained in the Anglican Church under the compromise of Elizabeth, and which had already produced exactly the same phenomena in the time of Laud. How many converts have the Roman Catholics—either the old Roman Catholics or the more dreaded Neophytes—made, except among those who

had been led up to the verge by Tractarianism, and to whom the voice of the Roman Catholic tempter was only the echo of the resolution already formed in their own minds. Our fancy, nursed on legends of Jesuitical energy and guile, invests the most commonplace Roman Catholic not only with a zeal for his religion surpassing that of the most zealous members of other Churches, but with powers of seduction bordering on the miraculous. The Roman Catholics themselves have been led by experience to form a more modest estimate of their own gifts. At the height of the Romanizing movement at Oxford, when the most tempting opportunity appeared to offer itself to proselytizing enterprise, they kept entirely aloof from the field. No addition was made to their unpretending and unattractive little chapel in the suburbs, no eminent preacher or theologian was sent to take the place of its humble priest, not a Jesuit was ever heard of in the place. Such want of enterprise on the part of the enemy ought surely to shame the veriest coward out of his fears. It seems even that the new wine of Neophyte zeal has been very near bursting the old bottle of orthodox Romanism into which it was poured. The 'Papal Aggression' which filled the English nation with ignominious panic, had its source wholly in an element of the Anglican Establishment which the English nation persists in pressing to its bosom, while it bellows with fury at the inevitable result; which has notoriously produced exactly the same effects before, and, if preserved, will go on producing the same effects, when-

ever an opening appears for a sacerdotal and sacramental reaction, so long as the Papacy, the heart of sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, continues to exist*. Mr. Bouverie's Bill for enabling colleges to admit Nonconformists to fellowships was opposed in debate by an eminent and zealous Roman Catholic, whose example, there is reason to believe, would have been followed on a division by other Roman Catholic members of the House. This is a pretty plain proof that those who best understand the interests of the Roman Catholic Church would expect no further facilities for the propagation of their creed from the free intercourse of students in mixed places of education. Thus much at least of that redoubtable sagacity still lingers in its ancient seat.

If the University were thrown open, its professorships would of course be thrown open at the same time. This has been done in the case of the Scotch Universities without any evil consequences to religion. Ecclesiastics are in the habit of attributing to others the

* It would be wrong in any one to speak of these unpopular features of the movement which bore the name, and was inspired by the genius, of Dr. Newman, without paying the tribute due to the chivalry, disinterestedness, and greatness of its earlier days, and acknowledging that by breaking up the 'High and Dry' regime, it did much to resuscitate religious life among the upper classes in England. Possibly it may prove to have done a still greater service by breaking through barriers which would otherwise have formed a hopeless obstacle to the reconciliation of divided Churches. Nor must the spiritual experience which its authors gained, at so great a cost to themselves, be left out of the account, in estimating the gratitude due to them, even though the lamp kindled by their self-devotion should light the paths of others rather than their own.

passion for proselytism which animates themselves. They imagine that if a teacher of geology or history happens not to be a member of the Anglican Church, his great aim in all his instructions will be to undermine the faith of his Anglican pupils, and that he will sacrifice to this collateral object the confidence of his audience, the interest of his science, and the scientific eminence, which so far as he has any personal end, must be his own personal end in life. Jesuitical practices are not so congenial to the natures of ordinary men. The apprehension is entirely local: nobody in London thinks it necessary to inquire whether the man of science to whose lectures he proposes to go and take his children, belongs to his own or a different communion. May it not in fact be said that lecturers on physical science especially, who are the greatest objects of suspicion, are, generally speaking, rather nervously apprehensive of giving offence in these matters and rather apt to go out of their way to conciliate the religious feelings of their hearers? As to scientific atheists, if they are to be found anywhere, as it is possible they may be in the present unhappy relations between theology and science, they are most likely to be found, not among Nonconformists, whose nonconformity can scarcely fail to be caused by some positive conviction, but among nominal professors of the State religion, burning, with a smile, a little harmless incense to the established divinity, and taking with cynical composure any tests which the established superstition may require. Besides which, it must be remembered that the real teachers of the University

are already very far from being exclusively orthodox. Books are now our real teachers. The Professor's chair is no longer of the importance that it was in the middle ages as the source of new knowledge and the organ of original thought: it has been superseded for these purposes by the press. Among the list of authors recommended by the University we find Hume and Gibbon. We find Sismondi, whose writings are a good deal tinctured with the sentiments of an *esprit fort*. We find Hallam, whose chapters on ecclesiastical history contain remarks on religious questions, especially on the Anglican doctrine of the Eucharist, which, if delivered from a Professor's chair, would set the University in a flame. Among the authors not formally recommended by the University, but in constant use and virtually acknowledged by the examiners, is Mr. Stuart Mill, whose chapter on Social Science embodies the atheistic theory of Comte. Any writer, however heretical or sceptical, whose work is likely to be of use to the students in preparing for the examinations is sure to find his way into their hands. The book-shops too are open: there lie Essays and Reviews, and the writings of Bishop Colenso: there lie Francis Newman, Theodore Parker, Rénan, Buckle, Comte: and there will lie every other enemy of orthodoxy whose works may be commended to public curiosity either by their own merits or by the denunciations of the Bishops. When conversation turns on the religious questions of the day, it is as free in Oxford as elsewhere, possibly it is even made a little more free by the pleasure of breaking through

a nominal restraint. The antidotes, and in the immense majority of cases, the effectual antidotes to whatever is pernicious in these influences are the same which operate at home and which preserve men in the world at large. No one has yet been chimerical enough to propose any other correctives. No one has suggested an Index Expurgatorius for the booksellers' shops or even for the authors to be recognized by the University. Oxford, with her closed degrees and her open libraries and book-shops, is a city with strongly fortified gates but with no walls. The barbican and portcullis of the middle ages still frown in the tests and in the statute enjoining Professors to 'accommodate and attemper philosophy to theology,' a worthy companion of another statute directing the clerks of the market to punish forestallers and regrators: but the adversaries of the faith, or of that self-imposed blindness which arrogates the name of faith, have free entrance at every other point.

If any tendency were really shown by Professors to abuse their chairs for the propagation of irreligion, nobody could object to the enactment of such provisions as might be requisite to put a stop to the offence. To enact statutes, or enforce that which already exists, requiring that the facts of science should be distorted by lecturers in order to adapt them to a particular creed, would be a course most undesirable on many grounds, but especially because it would manifestly bring dishonour and ridicule on religion.

The Colleges, as has been already said, stand as

regards this question on a somewhat different footing from the University. They are private foundations; though they hold their perpetual endowments only by virtue of a special license of the State, which possesses and has exercised a corresponding power of adapting their regulations from time to time to the requirements of the public good; and though, under this power, most of them have been transferred from the Roman Catholic religion, which was that of their founders, to a religion which, as it divides the world with the Roman Catholic Church as an antagonist, can scarcely be described with truth as her heir. What is of more importance, it may be said of them, while it cannot be said of the University, that they carry on a system of religious education: a system the efficacy of which is, indeed, preposterously overrated in these discussions, consisting, as it does, mainly of compulsory attendance at chapel and at theological lectures which leave very little religious impression on the mind, and bearing, as it does, a very inconsiderable proportion to home influences, and to the spontaneous religion of Christian students; yet one which cannot be called altogether nugatory, or destitute of value in the eyes of Christian parents. Thus the claim of the Nonconformists in the case of the colleges is weaker than in the case of the University, and at the same time the difficulty of meeting it is more real. On the other hand the fellowships are the great prizes of academical industry; through them only can an entrance be found to that very important part of University education which

consists in intercourse with the most intellectual society of the place; nor can any one but the holder of a fellowship settle down, after taking his degree, to the pursuit of learning and science with a full enjoyment of all appliances, and in a satisfactory position. Thus a class of students ineligible to fellowships, though eligible to the higher degrees, would still be in a disadvantageous and somewhat humiliating condition.

The question is easily settled one way by those who have made up their minds that association with any person of a different creed from their own is dangerous, offensive to Heaven, and almost polluting. It is easily settled the other way by those who have made up their minds on religious grounds, and in the interest of religion, that no difference of creed shall ever stand in the way of their intimacy or of their cooperation with any Christian, or, indeed, with any honest man. But at this moment of transition and hesitation, the minds of most men are not distinctly made up one way or the other: and therefore it would be difficult to say, as to the colleges generally, or as to any particular college, how far the different ecclesiastical elements would harmonize with each other, and whether they would unite in carrying on the work of college education with the cordiality which the public interest requires. It would be difficult also to say how far this change in their religious position would affect any special connection among the parents of students which particular colleges may have formed, though the fear of a general withdrawal from places

of education, otherwise in high repute, because they were contaminated by the presence of a few Nonconformists, seems for the reasons before stated to be absurd. Roman Catholics are probably too much addicted to sectarian exclusiveness to present themselves as candidates for fellowships in a mixed society. Otherwise, there might no doubt be a difficulty in consenting to put up with the unsocial attitude and petulant airs of sectaries who have persuaded themselves that everything in Christendom is of the earth earthy, except that Church which has most miserably spoiled its spiritual essence by adulterous union with the worst powers of the earth, and by partnership, and more than partnership, in their worst crimes.

Under these circumstances there would seem on the whole to be no better course than that proposed by Mr. Bouverie in his Bill of last session, viz., to repeal the clause of the Act of Uniformity requiring Fellows of Colleges to make a declaration of Conformity at their admission, and then to leave the colleges free to deal with the question by their own powers of legislation as each of them may think fit*. This proposal received a good deal of support at Cambridge,

* The three colleges which availed themselves of the power given them to amend their own statutes during the first year of the late Parliamentary Commission have the power of amending all their statutes for the future, with the consent of the Visitor. The rest, for which, the first year having expired, the Commission made ordinances by default, have the power of amending those ordinances with the consent of Her Majesty in Council, and the rest of their statutes with the consent of the Visitor.

especially in the more distinguished colleges, and the petition sent up against it from Oxford was opposed by fifty-one members of Convocation, whose votes, it will not be very rash to say, were a better indication of the interest of the University as a place of learning and education, and of the interest of the community at large as distinguished from that of an ecclesiastical party, than the 180 votes given on the other side. It is true that the measure was discouraged, and in effect quashed by the present leader of the Liberal party, which proves, no doubt, that it was sincerely liberal in its character, but is very far from proving that it was injudicious or extreme.

The Oxford colleges in elections to fellowships are bound, under their new Parliamentary Ordinances, to choose that candidate, who, after examination, shall be found to be "of the greatest merit and most fit to be a fellow of the college as a place of religion, learning, and education." And their duty to education as well as to religion would require them under these words to reject every candidate who had shown by his previous conduct that he was likely to set an example of profanity or levity, to abuse his influence as a fellow for the purpose of proselytism among the students, or otherwise to give just offence and bring discredit on the society in matters of religion. On the other hand, they would not be bound or authorized, nor are they bound or authorized now, to give any weight to mere party sympathies or antipathies, to entertain vague suspicions suggested by loose tongues, or to institute an inquisitorial scrutiny into the

thoughts of men, over whose faith, in a time of general controversy and perplexity, a cloud may perhaps be passing, but whose character may not, perhaps, be on that account less essentially religious, nor their presence in a community less acceptable to really religious men. That those who have themselves been the great disturbers of men's minds in these matters, who have themselves introduced before our eyes, under the name of a revival, a new religion, the doctrines and ritual of which are still unsettled and in course of furtive development; who have led away many of the youth of England from the paths in which their fathers had walked for generations, and landed not a few of them in Roman Catholicism, and some in blank unbelief—that such men above all others should be extreme to mark and punish disturbance of conscience and unsettlement of faith in others, would not perhaps be very surprising, but it would be most ungenerous and unjust. And surely if to win waverers back to Christianity were the end in view, odious imputations and harsh treatment—harsh treatment at the age when it is most deeply felt and makes the most lasting impression—would not be the best means to that end. What is right rather than what is politic, should be the question when religion is concerned: but if policy is to be considered at all, it should be remembered that no enemies of religion are likely to be more deadly or more dangerous, than those who have felt religious injustice in their youth.

A large proportion of the Fellows in all the colleges, except All Souls, and the Heads of every college except

Merton, must be in Holy Orders*. This is a very strong guarantee against any disturbance of the religious system of college education; and a still stronger guarantee will probably be found, so long as the sentiments of English society remain what they now are, in the influence of public opinion. With regard to education, indeed, the admission of Nonconformists as undergraduates, which has already taken place in a few instances, might have been thought more subversive of the existing system, the rules of which it is necessary to break through in these cases, than the admission of Nonconformist fellows, who would not necessarily take any part whatever in the college education. The Act of Parliament requiring the Service of the Church of England to be performed daily in the college chapel would of course remain unaffected by any change in the Statutes respecting the election of fellows: and as the college is not the Ordinary, no majority of the fellows, supposing them to be so strangely inclined, would have the power of interfering with the college worship in any way whatever. So that those who look not to mere names and professions, often dignified with the title of principles, but to substantial results, might feel sufficiently secured against the destruction of anything which could possess a real value in their eyes. Whatever change did take place, moreover, would take place very gradually, and almost imperceptibly. Many years would probably elapse before Nonconformists would

* The Head of Oriel may by the Statutes be a layman, but a great part of the income consists of a canonry of Rochester annexed to the Provostship.

offer themselves in any considerable numbers as candidates for fellowships, and by that time it is quite possible that the hostile relations between those who are now distinguished as Churchmen and those who are now distinguished as Nonconformists may have undergone some change. The first effect of the relaxation would be to admit to fellowships men who have no desire to separate themselves practically from the Church of England, but whose consciences refuse, on moral and religious grounds, to take any kind of religious test. Cases of this kind have, it is believed, already occurred: and they involve peculiar hardship and absurdity, because the man who refuses on such grounds to become, like his contemporaries, a candidate for a fellowship, is driven to place himself before the University in the position of a Nonconformist, or even of a disbeliever in Christianity, when in point of fact he may be perfectly willing to remain in the Church in which he has been worshipping, and may object to nothing but the test. Even a Nonconformist, in the full sense of the term, though he might be honourably reluctant to renounce, for the sake of a fellowship, the communion of his fathers, would probably, in nine cases out of ten, after passing through the training of the University, and mingling for several years in its society, be very far from a separatist in temper or in practical religion. The Scotch and English Establishments, so far as the mass of their members are concerned, are in practical communion with each other, the Supreme Head of the English Establishment herself attending public worship according to the form

of the Scotch Establishment when she is in that part of her dominions: and nothing can be more irrational than to exact of a Scotch candidate for an English fellowship an act of ostensible apostasy, which to him is corrupting and humiliating, while to us it is valueless, or rather unmeaning. In effect, the religious character of the colleges would take its complexion from that of society at large; a result of which the members of a free community would scarcely have reason to complain. But unluckily there are many men who have not thoroughly learnt to regard themselves as members of a free community, or to think that the wishes of society at large are entitled to respect, but who still act on the assumption that they are members of a dominant party and sect, to which all national privileges exclusively belong, while the rest of the nation are in the position of suppliants and mendicants, whose importunities must be stoutly resisted at once, lest they should be emboldened in the end to demand a full measure of justice.

It would be uncandid to deny that the Colleges would have difficulties, and perhaps some internal dissensions to encounter, in the transition from one system to the other. The difficulties would probably be greatly diminished if the mere prize fellowships, tenable by non-residents as sinecures, could be separated from those held by the tutors of the college; a measure which is most desirable, and indeed will probably soon be found absolutely necessary, in order to secure to colleges a sufficient number of resident teachers in the different departments. But whatever they may

be, we have to set against them the gathering danger of a system of exclusion, which arrays against us not only the professed Nonconformist, but the able men of independent minds, who, their consciences being awakened, will no longer submit to the degradation of taking anything in the nature of a test. As to the dissension among the Fellows, it would scarcely be greater than that caused by the difference of opinion which prevailed in almost every college on the subject of the recent reforms, and which, it may confidently be said, has left behind no feelings of bitterness comparable to those which are frequently engendered by the election of a Head.

It is very probable that colleges would take different courses in this matter, according to their different tempers and connections. If they did, the anomaly would not be very startling, considering the mass of anomalies, ecclesiastical and political, by which we are surrounded; and the arrangement would probably be one fairly adapted, in a practical point of view, to the exigencies of the case. The Church of England, in fact, comprehends in herself, beneath the ostensible unity of the Establishment, a number of different sects, 'High Church,' 'Low Church,' and 'Broad Church,' which are at variance with each other, not only on secondary points of doctrine, but as to the very channels of spiritual life. Some of these sects demand greater exclusiveness than others. Some are much further removed than others from the evangelical portion of the Nonconformists. The independent action of the several colleges on this question

would probably provide for each sect colleges suited to its religious needs. And if there are any who prefer comprehension, and think the air of freedom favourable to religion, they are surely entitled to consideration among the rest.

It is convenient to have before us the objections to a proposed measure, in a compendious and authoritative form. The objections to repealing the clause of the Act of Uniformity, which requires persons elected to fellowships to make a declaration of Conformity, and thus setting the colleges free to legislate for themselves in the matter, as here proposed, are set forth compendiously, and with the highest authority, in the Petition of the University against Mr. Bouverie's Bill; which was afterwards printed as a manifesto, and signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, six Bishops, several lay Peers, and a very large proportion of the non-resident Members of Convocation. An examination of this document will, it is believed, tend to convince any statesman who looks at the question in the interest of the whole community, and not merely in that of an ecclesiastical party, that the objections, compared with the advantages, are not of very great weight.

The adverse authority of so many ecclesiastics of the highest rank is no doubt expected to daunt the advocates of reform. Yet the same adverse authority has been encountered by every reformer in turn; even by those whose reforms, as all men of sense now perceive, did the most essential service to religion by redeeming her from the taint of injustice

and reconciling her to the moral sense of an alienated nation. It is no flourish of rhetoric, but the simple and sober truth, to say that if no measure had been carried of which the Bishops did not approve, the country would have been long since plunged into revolution: and Catholic Emancipation was in fact resisted at their instigation, till the Duke of Wellington recoiled from the verge of civil war. Placed as these Prelates are, difficult of defence as their own political position is, they would show not only a disinterestedness, but a freedom from the spirit of their order more than human, if they were not habitually averse to change: and when their titles are set in array against us, we may reasonably ask to have their bias as well as their rank taken into the account. As to the University Convocation, from which, in the first instance, the document emanates, it is, as has been said before, a mere organ of the clerical profession, which has compelled a learned and scientific institution, or rather the body of such an institution, possessed by an alien spirit, to appear before the Legislature as the opponent of almost every great measure of progress, including Railways as well as Catholic Emancipation.

The mass of those who signed with the Archbishops and Bishops were, as might have been expected, clergymen, of whose professional bias in these matters no one can be ignorant, and whose interests, it cannot be too often repeated, are those of an order, though a most important order, not of the whole nation. Neither the number of the objectors therefore, nor the rank of some

of them, can be held to absolve the Legislature in the present case from scrutinizing their reasons.

Those reasons are comprised in three clauses. The first clause sets forth, "That the removal of the only test now by law required of tutors and fellows of colleges generally would render admissible to collegiate government and instruction persons of divergent religious creeds, or of no religious creed whatever." It is not to be denied that the removal of a religious restriction will render admissible persons who were before excluded on account of religion: such was not only the obvious tendency but the avowed object of Mr. Bouverie's Bill. But the question submitted to the judgment of statesmen is, what will be the practical effect of the relaxation? Will the character of college government and instruction be really rendered less religious? Are any other practical evils likely to result comparable in magnitude to the advantage of relieving conscience and opening these great places of education to the whole community? Will not religion, on a broad and statesmanlike view of its interests, be the gainer by this as it has been by other measures of emancipation? 'Persons of no religious creed' is a customary phrase when these alarms are to be raised. But what is its exact meaning? If it means profane scoffers at religion, it will remain the duty of the electors under their general trust, as guardians of a place of "Religion, Learning, and Education," to exclude such persons, notwithstanding the removal of the test. If it means persons labouring under sincere doubt and disturbance of conscience on

the subject of religion, it may very well be questioned whether contact with such persons ever made an irreligious impression, or failed to make something of a religious impression on any man or society. In fact, as has been said before, such persons are already to be found among the fellows of colleges; yet the mischievous effects of their presence had not become visible to the framers of the petition, who assume that, at present, all is well. There is indeed another class of persons 'of no religious creed whatever,' in any deep sense of the term, whose presence and example may teach young hearts to mistrust religion: but these persons are likely to be found, not bending under the obloquy which a world at once careless and pharisaical casts on honest doubt, but nimbly mounting the ladder of preferment, and denouncing, from the high places of the Church, for the gratification of the religious public, men who have braved everything and sacrificed everything for the sake of religious truth.

The next clause is, "That the Universities are seminaries of the Church of England, and owe their greatness chiefly to their connection with the Church; and that the Church could not safely entrust her future clergy to persons who had given no security for their soundness in the faith." The first part of this rather complex and not very coherent proposition has been, in effect, answered before. It is not true, legally or historically, that Oxford and Cambridge are "seminaries of the Church of England." They are legally lay corporations: historically they are national Universities, which in their most memorable

era were rather antagonists than servants of the clergy; but in which clerical influence has since, through a combination of accidents, become supreme. That the University owes its greatness to its connection with the Church is, in one sense, most true. These, like all the other institutions of Christendom, owe, and will continue to owe, their greatness to the spirit of Christianity, which, regardless of the barriers erected between one Christian community and another by clerical schisms and state creeds, still pervades and secretly unites the divided frame, everywhere sustaining self-devotion, the source of greatness; and which perhaps has often been present, though uninvoked, at the beneficent labours of the study and the laboratory, while it has been absent, though invoked, from the formal rites of an intolerant and cruel state religion. The presence among us of a large proportion of students and men of learning devoted to a spiritual calling is also of inestimable value, provided that they will be content to use the University and exert their due influence in it without making it their slave. But no one, without setting at defiance the plainest facts of academical history, can pretend that this University, as a seat of learning and science, has been greatest when it has been most under the dominion of the clergy. It was greatest, as has been said already, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when it was the centre of mental activity in all departments, and really led the intellect of the nation. It was least great, or rather it was most degraded, in the eighteenth century, when it was absolutely in the hands of the clergy and of the High

Church party among the clergy, and when learning and science were almost exiles from its walls, education sank into a farce, the professorial chairs were silent, and so much of the time of the Heads and Fellows as was not consumed in 'deep but dull potations,' was spent in fomenting High-Church conspiracies against the peace and liberty of the nation. Even Theology has failed to profit in any way by the efforts of a clerical legislature to put every other subject of study under her feet: and monopoly in this case, as in others, has proved most injurious to the monopolists themselves.

If the University has recently revived, and become more useful and an object of greater respect to the nation; if great reforms have been made, our revenues more fairly distributed, and our fellowships and scholarships opened to merit; if physical science, jurisprudence and political economy have been recalled, or are being recalled, from their long banishment, and the chairs of their teachers are being properly endowed; all this has been done notoriously under the pressure of public opinion, notwithstanding the opposition of the clerical party, as represented by its most influential leaders, though, it must be gratefully acknowledged, with the aid and under the guidance of some members of the order, among the highest in intellect, and, if to engage the confidence of cultivated and independent minds is a service, not among the lowest in their services to religion.

As a seat of science especially the University seems as far as possible from owing any greatness she may

possess to clerical dominion, particularly at the present crisis. An antagonism has evidently arisen between science and theology, the source of which lies not in the nature of the subjects themselves (for it would be absurd to suppose that truth could be the antagonist of truth) but in the difference of the modes in which they have respectively been studied. Science has been studied at once freely and with humility, by that method of patient and conscientious investigation which, for purposes obviously connected with our moral training, the Creator has prescribed as the sure and the only road to truth. Theology has been studied neither freely nor with humility, but dogmatically, that is at once slavishly and arrogantly, in a way that never has led, nor, till the ordinances of the Author of Truth are changed, ever will lead to the attainment of the truth. The natural consequence is, that while science has rapidly advanced and obtained a great and too engrossing dominion over the mind of man, theology has fallen into decay: it has fallen into decay so completely, that philosophers of a certain school are beginning, not without plausibility or without success, to represent it as merely a transitory and now extinct mode of explaining phenomena, of which science offers the true and final explanation. This state of things will doubtless be reversed so soon as theology begins to be studied by as sound a method as science; and science will then lower its pretensions to their proper level and recede into its own domain. But in the meantime it is not to be expected that the two studies should be very good friends to each other, or that their votaries should be free from mutual

suspicion. Not that men of science are, as a class, irreligious. As a class they are probably far less irreligious than ordinary men of the world, even those men of the world in whom clerical confidence is most reposed; nor do they, generally speaking, show any tendency to renounce Christianity, or to separate themselves in life or death from the communion of Christendom. They are in fact still held in allegiance by those substantial and rational truths of Christianity which barren and irrational dogma only overlays. But they would be sinners against the light that is in them if they did not recoil from mere absurdities, particularly when tendered in a damnatory form and stamped as falsehoods to all uncorrupted minds by their connection with a spirit of persecution. Hence the existence of science in the University of Oxford is a hard struggle against theological jealousy, which sometimes breaks forth in rather animated expressions. The motives of the theological party are such as ought not for a moment to be impugned. They are contending for what they rightly think a higher object against an object which they rightly think lower, though it is to be hoped that they are wrong in thinking the two incompatible. But there can be little doubt that if their wishes had prevailed science would scarcely have been re-admitted into the University: and there can be as little doubt that if their wishes could now prevail, it would either be banished once more, or studied and taught under such conditions as would render it the scorn of the intellectual world. Such a result would be peculiarly adverse to the greatness of the University at a moment when science, owing

to its recent achievements, and still more to the ground of certainty which its conclusions afford amidst the apparent uncertainty and inconclusiveness of theology and philosophy, enjoys an exceptional degree of reverence, so that, without it, no intellectual institution can command the confidence of men.

The latter part of the clause last quoted asserts, "That the Church could not safely entrust her future clergy to persons who had given no security for their soundness in the faith." We will not here discuss the assumption that tests, so often taken with a smile by open unbelievers, are securities for soundness in the faith. But we must ask what assurance the Oxford Council who framed this document, or even the Prelates and others who afterwards signed it, can have of their own competency thus to speak for the national Church. The national Church legally speaking is the English nation: while the practical arbiters of clerical education are the holders of Church patronage, who form the "congregation" by which "ministers" are "lawfully called" to their office in an establishment. And it may be pretty confidently predicted that the nation at large, and the holders of patronage if they shared the general sentiments of their countrymen, would continue to prefer clergymen trained in a place of free education, even though it might contain some Dissenters, to clergymen trained in an exclusive "seminary" under teachers of their own order. Reaction has not gone so far as to make the English people forget their dislike of priests and Jesuits, or of spiritual guides trained

in a priestly and Jesuitical school. Nor does there seem any reason to believe that the mass of men intending to become clergymen would differ in their feelings on this point from their countrymen generally; or that they would be wanting in the contemptuous repugnance felt by almost all Englishmen to things which seek seclusion from light and air. If the University continued to give the best education and to bestow on those trained in her schools the means of intellectual influence over the people, she would, in all probability, continue to attract students destined for the clerical calling: and neither she nor they would suffer a deprivation which to her, as has been admitted, would be very great, and which would be at least equally great to them. Something they might lose perhaps in corporate zeal; but they would gain more in individual power. Something they might lose as champions of orthodoxy; but they would gain more as teachers of the truth. And when we consider to what moral liabilities men destined for the cure of souls are already exposed in the course of their undergraduate life, and the complacency with which the beneficial effects of freedom are accepted as a full compensation for a mass of moral evils, it is difficult to forbear smiling at the fears of those who regard with so much horror the additional danger of a somewhat earlier contact with differences of religion, of the existence of which the student is of course perfectly aware. Why is the daily and hourly sight of Nonconformity at home and in the world harmless, but at the University ruinous to faith?

The third objection is, "That the relations between fellows of colleges are very intimate, and that the harmony and confidence now subsisting must be destroyed by differences on the most important of all subjects." When we consider that these words are penned by men who have the facts before their eyes, and countersigned by men in high and responsible stations, who had the facts before their eyes but yesterday, and when we also consider that the statement is made for a purpose affecting the rights of others, some thoughts arise in the mind to which on the whole it is better not to give expression. If the harmony and confidence subsisting between fellows of colleges have not been disturbed by the violent controversies and mutual persecutions of the last thirty years, they must be tolerably proof against disturbing influences of that kind; and we may justly as well as charitably infer that the fellows are not so wanting in Christian courtesy, or so despicably incapable of living on good terms with those who conscientiously differ from them in matters of religion, as the authors of this manifesto would make them out to be.

We have spoken of religious education in the colleges, and admitted that on that special point there might be fair ground for apprehending a difficulty, which, however, would in practice probably soon melt away. There is no other relation between fellows of colleges, nor is anything else transacted between them, as the framers and supporters of the University Petition are very well aware, with which, if the fellows are men of common sense and common good breeding, a dif-

ference of religious opinion need in any way interfere. Many of the fellows, a large majority of them indeed, are habitually non-resident, and merely draw their income. And no man, if his own rights and interests were in question, not those of others, would pretend that he could not dine in the hall, drink his wine and read the newspaper in the common room, or take part in college meetings for the management of the estates with men of a different way of thinking from himself about the order of Bishops or the Athanasian Creed. We all do this every day of our lives.

The fourth and last objection, which is rather incongruously blended into one clause with the third is, "That open antagonism in the religious belief of their teachers and governors must have a tendency to lead students to regard religious truth as a matter of indifference." One should have supposed that antagonism (if it must be so called) in the religious belief of conscientious men would rather have a tendency to lead students (if students have any sense) to regard religious truth as a matter of great importance to both the contending parties. Suppose the framers of this document had been present when St. Paul withstood St. Peter to the face, would they have inferred that neither of the two Apostles cared anything for Christianity? What they probably mean is that we should no longer be able to point to the exclusive enjoyment of academical emoluments by the professors of the true religion, as an evidence of its truth: but probably this evidence is less cogent, and the withdrawal of it would be less

fatal, in the eyes of the students, still in the season of enthusiasm and disinterestedness, than in the eyes of older and shrewder men. It will be observed, too, that it is *open* antagonism alone which the petitioners deprecate. *Real* antagonism, and that on the most vital questions, they know already exists among us; but they think that a nominal unity is still valuable, though sincere unity is notoriously gone. In whose eyes is a nominal unity valuable? In those of sensible men, or in those of the allseeing God?

A collection of hymns, made by a very eminent member of this University, and one whose name is greatly respected by the High Church party, is now in every one's hands. These hymns, like all good hymns, express the very deepest feelings of religion; feelings, to be united in which, is to be united in the very essence of spiritual life. Many of those in the collection are the work of professed Nonconformists. Others are the work of men of the extreme Evangelical party, who were regarded as virtual Nonconformists, though they were nominally within the pale of the Established Church. And we are told that the men whose most fervent outpourings of devotion are here mingled together could not, without scandal and disparagement to Christianity, have performed the common offices of life together. We are told that Heber and Charles Wesley could not have lived peaceably within the same college walls; or that, if they had, the students would have been led to regard religious truth as a matter of indifference!

Who would write such things anywhere but in a University petition?

Sectarianism in the eyes of sectarians is fidelity to principle: in the eyes of statesmen it is an evil. Every statesman, looking to the calamities of all kinds which have flowed directly or indirectly from the religious divisions of England and of Christendom, must desire that these divisions shall, if possible, be brought to an end. It is vain to hope that the reunion will be effected by controversies on questions of dogma which have been carried on without an approach to agreement for three centuries, and may be carried on with the same absence of result for ever; the questions being, in fact, such as reason can never determine, and at the same time perfectly unpractical, so that neither party can have any practical motive for giving up that which each has been trained, as a point of ecclesiastical honour, and as an article of salvation, obstinately and even blindly to maintain*. It will be effected, if at all, and has to some extent already been effected, by measures of political and social emancipation, which throw men of

* Who, for example, can hope that the clergy of the Western Churches will convert those of the Eastern, or that those of the Eastern will convert those of the Western, by controversial reasoning on the question respecting the "Procession" of the Third Person from the Second Person of the Trinity; a doctrine to which no human understanding can attach any meaning whatever, and which, therefore, no argument can touch, while the opposite dogmas are rooted in the minds of the combatants, by pride, habit, and the traditional conviction that the repetition of the affirmative, or of the negative form of words, is essential to salvation?

different sects together in the offices of political and social life, and make them sensible of each other's virtues, whereby Christian morality, the uniting element, is brought by degrees into the foreground, and dogma, the dividing element, is by degrees thrown into the background, and may, in the end pass practically out of view. This consideration, as well as those of mere political justice and tranquillity, will, in the eyes of statesmen, be an inducement to embrace a policy of emancipation. But it will be the reverse of an inducement in the eyes of those to whom theoretically, if not practically, dogma is the essence of religion.

The only further observation to be made on the University petition, against the emancipation of the Colleges, is that it evidently emanates from persons who regard the preservation of "the last test" as a matter on which the life of the Church depends; whereas many public men must by this time have made up their minds, that the last test is the last leaf upon the bough, which will hang only till the winds awake, and that the religion of the nation must henceforth be founded, and is capable of being founded, on the broader and most enduring basis of social equality and justice.

One more point remains, which shall be mentioned separately, as it lies beyond the scope both of the Petition against Religious Tests and of Mr. Bouverie's Bill. It is commonly proposed by the advocates of University Emancipation, as a reasonable compromise with the other party, to open the Faculties of

Arts, Law and Medicine, but to leave the Theological Faculty confined to the Established Church; and the principle of this proposal was followed in the Cambridge University Act, which excepted the Theological Degrees from the general measure of relaxation. The friends of liberal measures are perhaps rather too ready to sacrifice anything connected with the department of theology, which they have had too much reason to think utterly hopeless, as a propitiation to their opponents. Looking at the question however as we are here endeavouring to look at it, in the interest of the whole community, there seems some reason to believe that an open Faculty of Theology might at the present moment be the most important of all.

It must be evident to every man, and almost to every child, that religious doubt has overspread the face of Christendom. This is not the place to inquire what limits would be assigned to the extent of the calamity by an observer capable of taking a calm and comprehensive view of the religious world in all its parts, and of distinguishing the mere disintegration of Byzantine and Roman dogma, or the final decay of the mediæval Theocracy, from the actual growth of convictions opposed to the fundamental and vital truths of Christianity as set forth in the New Testament, which really sustain Christian society and life. No new religion, or substitute for a new religion, has yet appeared, except the bastard Christianity of Rousseau and the crazy worship of humanity which emanated from the decaying reason of Comte: nor do men who have evidently rejected the dogmatic creeds of Christianity and a great

part of its historical evidences cease to bring up their children as Christians, or visibly to draw their own spiritual life from Christian influences acting on them through the community in which they live. Here, however, it is enough to say, what we also perceive and must lament, that doubt now fills the hearts, and is on the lips of men; that it not only finds vent in a great body of sceptical writings on theology, which are the more eagerly read the more anxiously they are discountenanced by the clergy, but pervades, in a more subtle but not less seductive shape, the works of the popular philosophers, historians, poets and novelists, by whom the sentiments of the age are at once expressed and framed; that it begins to exercise a disturbing influence even on the moral convictions of society; that it paralyzes or perplexes social as well as individual action, and enfeebles the characters of leading men, to whom society looks in vain for the cure of its maladies when they are unable to heal their own; and that it fills all men and nations with perplexity and with deep mistrust of the future. It may probably be said that at the present time, as in the sixteenth century, the restless heavings and tossings of society, which on a superficial view appear to be merely political revolutions, are in part at least the outward symptoms of the deeper disturbance which fills the soul of the world, and of which every educated man, if he will speak the truth to himself, will acknowledge the presence in his own heart. This state of things must be a matter of anxiety to the statesman as well as to the theologian. For that religion is the basis of civilization, the only

sufficient sanction of the moral principles on which society depends, and the only lasting spring of the unselfish affections and actions which bind men into a community, and save that community from dissolution, is admitted by all philosophic observers of real eminence, even by those who adore God under the disguise of Nature, or who pay religious worship to scientific facts, dignified, by a transparent misnomer, with the title of laws. A prolonged period of scepticism therefore cannot fail to produce social and political disaster, the evils of which the continued existence of a state religion, when once generally felt to be untrue, will aggravate, both by inflaming the destructive violence of scepticism, and by preventing the free action of the reconstructive power.

The French Revolution, though it has been graphically described by more than one great historian, has never been thoroughly analyzed as a political phenomenon for the purposes of political science. But we can have little hesitation in pronouncing which of its complex causes was the deepest and most powerful. De Tocqueville's work on the *Ancien Régime*, among others, has shown that the misgovernment, though great, was not great enough to produce so terrible a convulsion. The economical distress prevailed most in the rural districts, which were not the chief seat of the revolution. And the subsequent history of France, indeed that of the revolutionary government itself, proves that there was not in the French people a deeply seated hatred of monarchy, or a strong desire for a republic. Rousseauism, embodied in the Jacob-

ins, proved itself the strongest element in the struggle, as extreme Puritanism, embodied in Cromwell and the Independents, proved itself the strongest element in the English Revolution: and the deepest cause of the catastrophe was the religious disturbance, of which Voltaire represented the more critical, Rousseau the more emotional, and therefore the more energetic part. A State religion had been maintained by a despotic government in a very hateful and oppressive form, long after it had ceased to command the intellectual allegiance of the more educated and active-minded part of the people: a prolonged period of covert scepticism masked by an outward conformity ensued; the Court itself ceasing to feel, or even to pretend, respect for the State Church which it supported; until, the pressure of economical distress and a crisis of political difficulty coinciding with a convulsive effort to attain to a new religious, or a least a new social, faith, the whole of the undermined surface gave way, and brought temple and tower together in ruin to the ground. The State religion has not been so exclusively enforced, nor has the yoke of the State clergy been so heavy in this country as in France before the revolution: the mischief done to the faith of the nation has therefore not been so great: but nevertheless great mischief has been done, and statesmen will soon be called upon to deal with the results.

To put the same thing in another way, the account of the present distress is to be sought in the long suspension of religious thought, and the consequent accumulation of religious difficulties pressing for solution.

It is no disparagement to Christianity, as the sole and sufficient source of spiritual life, to say that its advent did not consign the religious intellect of man to perpetual torpor, or condemn it for ever to the scarcely intellectual function of handing down and repeating certain theological formularies, drawn up in the primitive or early ages of the Church. The general plan of the Creator's dealings with us would lead us, on the contrary, to expect that active service would be required of the intellect in matters of religion as well as in other matters: and that difficulties and problems would be, from time to time, presented to us in religion, in the effort to solve which man would deepen his religious character, and see further into the things of God. Not but that there was a faith which was committed to the Church by its Founder, to be simply held for ever, and which those who sold the spiritual independence of the Church for State endowments, and the support of political power, most miserably, and almost to the ruin of Christendom, betrayed. If however such is the arrangement of Providence, it is plain that the religious intellect of man cannot with impunity be kept in forced inaction, while all other kinds of speculation and knowledge continue to advance. Yet it is this that the old governments of Europe, moved partly by bigotry, partly by fear, and prompted by the holders of Church endowments, have done by means of their State Churches; which have suspended religious thought, so far as it could be suspended, by perpetuating, in Roman Catholic countries, the superstition of the middle ages; and in Protestant

countries, by arresting the movement of the Reformation at different points, all equally arbitrary, and determined not by reason or conscience, but by political power. That which they have so long been sowing, we have now reaped. And if the cause of the malady be here rightly assigned, the cure is to set the religious intellect free, and allow it to grapple, though late, with the difficulties which, through its previous inaction, coupled with the activity of science, have gathered round the faith of Christendom.

The priest party on the Continent, of course, summarily explain the spread of religious doubt as a gratuitous outbreak of human wickedness; and proceed to allay it by darkening, as far as they can, the peccant reason of all under their influence, by bringing into play the machinery of religious terror, and by tendering the alliance of the Church to political rulers, even the most notorious debauchees and atheists, as the price of measures of ecclesiastical reaction. A similar view of the case is taken, and an analogous course is pursued, by the corresponding party in this country, who, in the time of need, are almost as little fastidious as their brethren on the Continent in scrutinizing the religious character of those whom they deem useful as political allies. Those who think more charitably of human nature, and who believe that human reason is the work of God, will remark that though prolonged scepticism unquestionably has a tendency to shake the foundations of morality, many of those whose hearts are filled with religious doubt are among the best of men, the purest in life, the most

disinterested in their objects, the most ready to sacrifice everything to truth and right; and, generally, that this age, though perplexed in religious belief, is on the whole not much inferior to any of those that have gone before in heroism and self-devotion, however readily priests may account for these qualities, when displayed on the wrong side, as cunning delusions of devils counterfeiting the appearance of angels of light. They will further observe, that scepticism is most prevalent in those countries where the previous repression of religious inquiry has been most severe: and notably, that under the immediate pressure of the Papacy and of the great Catholic despotisms which were its instruments of coercion, the extinction of faith has been almost entire. And thus they will rather be led to conclude, both on grounds of moral justice and of policy, that the right mode of dealing with the malady is, not to adopt measures of repression (which in truth it might on many grounds be difficult to carry into effect with sufficient force), but to give men, if possible, new assurance of their faith.

And how is this new assurance of faith to be given? Every man knows in his heart that it can be given only by free, patient, and careful inquiry, carried on with the requisite knowledge, and with a single-hearted love of truth. If there is a God, and if His voice speaking in our nature does not mock us, we shall be led to the truth in this and in no other way. But who is to carry on the free inquiry? Not the theologians of the Established Church, for they are precluded by law from seeking truth on the questions as to which doubt has

arisen, and bound under the severest penalties to maintain the very doctrines which are called in question, notwithstanding any new arguments which may be brought forward, and any new facts which the progress of learning and science may disclose. That the function of an Established Clergy is to teach, not truth, but the doctrines prescribed by the State; and that, in fact, the business of such a clergy is not with truth, is laid down by Sir Stephen Lushington, in his memorable judgment, with an unflinching breadth of statement which reminds us of the terrible decision of Judge Ruffin on the condition of the Slave. "It is said this authoritative imposition of doctrine would deny to clergymen participation in modern discoveries of science or history. A difficulty thus arises. On the one hand it seems not reasonable to suppose that it was intended to shut out all inquiry and abnegate all future discoveries, however important. On the other, the Act of the Legislature proceeded on this basis, that for the purposes intended, the Church was in possession of all the truth, and that nothing in that respect remained to be discovered. Accordingly the Articles were framed, and all clergymen forbidden under severe penalties to impugn them. But, to remove all doubt, I will put the case in a strong point of view. I will presume a discovery to be made of great importance, and proved to the satisfaction of very many scholars and divines, and that such discovery militates against some of the Articles. What is the duty of a clergyman? what of the Court? Is the clergyman at liberty to use such discoveries so as advisedly to maintain what

is repugnant to the Articles? I apprehend, certainly not. *Is the Court to discuss whether the discovery be a real or true discovery, to define its effect and operation? The Court can do no such thing; it has only to administer the law. The duty of the Court is to shut its ears to all such discoveries. It is bound by law so to do. The law must be obeyed even in what may be termed most extravagant circumstances.* The Court of Queen's Bench proclaimed and adhered to that principle in the case of Ashford *v.* Thornton (1. B. and Ald. 460), where Wager of Battel was demanded. Assuming the possibility of such discoveries as I have supposed, *the consequence may arise that discussions by the clergy, leading to truth, may be excluded:* but if such indeed be the case, and if it should be deemed to need redress, recourse must be had to the highest authorities, viz. the Legislature, which established the Articles and Book of Common Prayer." Even the Bible is a sealed book to the theologian of the Established Church, except for the purpose of discovering arguments in support of the doctrines prescribed by law; nor will he be allowed to allege Scripture in defence of his published opinions before an Ecclesiastical Court any more than he will be allowed to allege reason and truth. "In investigating the justice of such a charge," said the Privy Council, in Bardon *v.* Heath, "we are bound to look solely to the Statute and to the Articles. It would be a departure from our duty if we were to admit any discussion as to the conformity or nonconformity of the Articles of Religion, or any of them, with the Holy Scriptures." Who would be so infatuated as to take

the pretended conclusions of theologians placed under such conditions as these for a new assurance of his faith? And the case is the same with regard to the former as it is with regard to the existing writers of the Established Church: no assurance or comfort can be derived in our present perplexities from any of them, however great their learning, acuteness, and eloquence, for the plain reason that on every doubtful question of real moment their lips were sealed by law. Nor, it is to be feared, will a clergyman do anything but mischief, either to himself or to the community, by desperately fencing with legal obligations, and attempting to exercise a right of inquiry, which the pretended inquirer has renounced, and which the law denies. The reasonings of writers so fettered must, from the nature of the case, be hesitating and their language dark; they must deal more in suggestion than in plain statement; yet, from their position, they will always be taken to mean much more than they say; and their works consequently are sure to scatter suspicion and distress without settling any question of which they treat, and to produce at once the greatest possible amount of irritation and the smallest possible amount of conviction. Even if a few real loopholes are discovered in the law as the result of the suits to which such attempts give rise, these loopholes, being merely accidental, and the result of ignorance or oversight on the part of the legislator, are of little value for the broad purposes of inquiry; while the struggle to make them available is a waste of generous effort, which should be directed not to

obtaining loopholes for a few, but to obtaining an open door for all. It may at least be said, however, of these persons that their conduct, which inevitably exposes them to obloquy and exclusion from preferment, is not only disinterested but self-sacrificing in the highest degree. The same can hardly be said of those who take advantage of the state of the market afforded by these disturbances to vend theological drugs compounded of immoral ingredients, as antidotes to the spirit of truth working in the hearts of men, through doubt, to a better and more enduring faith. But even these drugs, the object of which is to deaden particular misgivings, are by one degree less noxious in their practical effects than the attempt, for which the Oxford school of theology is peculiarly responsible, to crush all conscientious inquiry by arguments tending to universal scepticism, and to prevent the promulgation of inconvenient truths by teaching the world to despair of truth. Yet works affecting to prove that men cannot know God, and, by necessary implication, that God cannot make Himself known to man, have been applauded by the enemies of religious inquiry as memorable apologies for the Christian revelation.

Nor does it seem possible to confer the power of free inquiry which the age requires on the theologians of the Established Church. Sir Stephen Lushington says, that if further liberty is needed recourse must be had to the Legislature, which established the Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. But the Legislature which established the Articles and the Book of Common Prayer no longer exists. That

Legislature was an exclusively Anglican legislature, which might, without flagrant incongruity, make laws for the Anglican communion. It has passed away: and in its place there now sits a mixed assembly of Anglicans, Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Jews. A reformation of the Anglican code of doctrine by such a Legislature as this is more than minds the most tolerant of logical inconsistencies could be brought to endure; not to mention that any recourse to the Legislature would at once lay bare to the eyes of all men the real foundation of the Anglican faith, now hidden from the mass by the incrustations of a respectable antiquity. The Established Church has in fact drifted from her moorings in history to an alien shore. The general system of which she was a part has broken up, and she remains, the creature of the Tudor Kings and Parliaments, surviving the authors of her being, and with her only power of legislation and self-adaptation buried in their grave. So insuperable does this obstacle seem that it is superfluous to discuss other difficulties. We need not inquire whether it would be possible to bring the different parties in the Church to an agreement as to the degree of liberty to be conceded; whether, in fact, after abandoning the present limit it would be possible, in the face of the flood of pent-up desire for liberty which would break forth the moment the gates began to open, to fix a limit anywhere else; or whether an Established Church without a fixed limit of doctrine would be anything but an established chaos.

Under these circumstances it would seem that the

free study of Theology in the Universities might possibly supply, in some measure at least, a pressing need which it is scarcely possible to supply in any other way. There, if anywhere, we might expect the study to be pursued with competent learning and with a due feeling of responsibility: and it would be pursued in immediate conjunction with Physical Science and Philosophy, with the conclusions of which it is the most pressing duty of the real theologian at the present juncture to reconcile religion. In order to set the study of Theology in the University free, it would be requisite, of course, to abolish the University Statute which confines the theological faculty to clergymen of the Established Church, but still more requisite to take from the authorities their legal power of punishing or harassing any member of the University on account of his religious opinions. To pretend that this measure would be a panacea for the religious malady of the age would be ridiculous: but it would at least tend to substitute the serious study of our theological difficulties by learned and religious men for the reckless diffusion of scepticism by the unlearned and irreligious. It must be admitted that it would cause at first something of a shock: but that shock would certainly not be greater than those which are caused by manifestations of doubt and disquietude of conscience, some of them emanating from clergymen, of the cessation of which there is no prospect whatever; while the knowledge that inquiry conducted through trustworthy organs was on foot, would in itself calm men's minds and dispose them to wait patiently for the result.

The study of theology in Oxford would then regain a real importance. At present, though sumptuously endowed, it confessedly languishes, not through the fault of the teachers, on whom the blame is commonly laid, but because nothing can be taught but Anglican or Patristic divinity and Ecclesiastical History; the great and vital questions of the day and the most influential works on the subject being necessarily excluded from view. No study pursued under such conditions could fail to sink into impotence and contempt. The professors of theology at the Universities have been called professors of an extinct science. It might be said, with more truth, that they are at this moment professors debarred from treating of their science; the scholastic science of theology having passed away, while the theology which investigates instead of dogmatising, (the foundations of which are beginning to be laid, though at present under rather sinister auspices,) is interdicted to the teachers of the Established Church. We shall be told at once that if free inquiry were permitted, our professors and students would all become sceptics. Of course, if you think fit to institute a free inquiry, you must resign yourself to the result. But to say that free inquiry, carried on by learned and conscientious men, must necessarily lead to sceptical conclusions, would be rash, since it would be equivalent to saying that sceptical conclusions must be true.

The University of Oxford has done much, both as an organ of mere repression, and as an organ of Romanizing speculation, to destroy the faith of the

nation: let her now, as an organ of rational and conscientious inquiry, do something to restore it.

The theological lectures of the college tutors would of course not be affected by the removal of the restrictions on the free study of the subject in the University; they, and everything that depends on them, would remain as before. Nor does there seem any reason to apprehend that their character would be injuriously influenced by the presence of free inquiry in the University, any more than it is by the presence of books containing the results of free inquiry in the University and College libraries, in the booksellers' shops, and on the shelves of the tutors. As to the theological professorships, the five of most importance are attached to canonries of Christ Church, which constitute their endowment, and are therefore necessarily held by ecclesiastics: while the professor of Exegesis is elected by the Heads of colleges, all of whom but one must be in Holy Orders. The emancipation of the study from restrictions prohibiting inquiries which might lead to truth is the only alteration in the existing state of things which it is proposed to make; and if truth is the first object, it is difficult to see on what ground such a prayer could be refused.

Let it be once more observed, in conclusion, that the point of view from which we have here endeavoured to regard the subject is that of the statesman, bound, in whatever he does, to look to the interest of the whole community, not of one party or Church alone. Arguments, therefore, based on the exclusive interest

of an ecclesiastical party, or even of a particular Church, would not be relevant in reply.

Perhaps a word may be added by way of appeal to those whose sympathies are on the side of emancipation, but who sit silent when the question is before the House of Commons, thinking it hopeless to move because we are in the midst of a conservative reaction. That we are in the midst of a conservative reaction is unquestionable. Its signs, grotesque as well as grave, are visible on all sides, in the comic as well as in the serious press, in the passion of literary men for prize-fighting, as well as in the defeats of the liberal party at the elections, and in the passing of new game-laws by the House of Commons. And this reaction has produced a government having a not very remote analogy in its character to the governments of the great reaction in the time of Charles II, and sustaining itself to a great extent by analogous means. But surely not much reflection is required to distinguish this back-stream of opinion, however rapid for the moment, and whatever strange relics of the past it may bear upon its surface, from the main current; or to assign its temporary causes, and, with them, the proximate limits of its existence. The lassitude and satiety which ensue after great political efforts, such as those which carried the Reform Bill and the Repeal of the Corn Laws, and the sudden influx of wealth among the governing classes, arising from railways, free-trade, and prosperous speculation, which for the moment gives a complete ascendancy to material interests, will, when taken together, go

very far to account for all that we see; and neither of these causes is of a permanent kind. Scepticism has of course found its way into political as well as into religious life, enfeebling the character of political chiefs, and making political parties mistrustful of their principles and of the future. It happens, moreover, that the popular party in this country is at the present moment under the guidance of an isolated group of aristocratic leaders, whose original connection with it was merely accidental, whose objects and convictions were, in most cases, exhausted when they had carried the Reform Bill, and put an end to their own exclusion from power; and who, if they have brought forward popular measures since that time, have brought them forward less from a sincere desire of carrying them, than to oust the Conservatives from office. An analogous but incomparably more violent reaction has taken place, mainly as a consequence of overstrained political effort, in France; its symptoms, even down to the revival of barbarous amusements, being nearly the same, while it has produced a government highly congenial in its character, as we have abundant reason to know, to the reactionary government of this country. In both countries alike the chief of the political reaction, though notoriously indifferent himself to religious questions, has found and sought allies and supporters of his power among the reactionary clergy; and each country has seen the unnatural, or perhaps the natural, union of the least austere men of the world with the most Pharisaical leaders of religious party and

their organs. But no one, looking over the history of Europe during the last half century, or even to the general state of things at the present moment, can doubt in which direction the main stream of opinion flows. Even in France the reactionary force begins to give signs of exhaustion; while in England the great organs of public opinion, even though the sympathies of their managers may be on the side of reaction, still do an unwilling homage to principles which are rooted in the deep convictions of the nation, and which will not fail, as soon as a real appeal is made to them, to respond to that appeal, and bring the reaction to an end. If the terrible strain laid on free institutions in America by the revolt of the Slaveowners has contributed to the prevailing mistrust of freedom, it now appears that free institutions will probably stand the strain, and that this cause of reaction also will cease to operate. We are told by politicians that when the present Government expires, a Conservative Government will certainly succeed to power. Be it so. A Government acting upon principle of any kind is more congenial and more advantageous to Liberalism, if Liberalism be sound, than cynical indifference. The tone of politics will be restored; and we can no more apprehend a repeal of any of the great liberal measures which have already been passed than we can apprehend that prize-fights will actually be legalized by Parliament, and celebrated under the patronage of the Queen. Whatever ministers come into office will find themselves placed, as before, at a

point, not alterable at their will, in the great movement of transition through which society is passing from its mediæval to its modern state. They will find themselves, the moment the public mind has recovered its tone, compelled to deal with the great problems which that transition involves—the problem of elevating the labouring class from their mediæval position of serfdom to that of full and enfranchised members of a real community, and the still more momentous problem of transferring the basis of religion, on which all society rests, from mediæval authority to conviction, the result of free inquiry and of liberty of conscience. Already a great economical question, closely connected with the first of these problems—the question of the land-laws as affecting the distribution of land—has begun to assume a practical aspect, and to gain a hold, which it will never loose, upon the public mind. Other symptoms of a change present themselves. The head of the reactionary Government lives almost avowedly from hand to mouth, sustaining himself by any support he can obtain for the moment, no matter from what quarter; and anxious only to stifle all great questions, the agitation of which, however essential to the ultimate welfare and to the ultimate peace of the country, might possibly interfere with his undisturbed possession of power for the remainder of his term. But the debate on the petition for the Abolition of Tests in the House of Commons showed that there were some among the younger public men disposed to look forward, and conscious that, though the Government and its views might be ephemeral,

for them and their country there was still a political future. If these men will embark in the cause of Religious Emancipation, they may be assured, at least, that it is no languid or fitful wave upon which their political fortunes will be borne. It is the mighty and irresistible tide of the Reformation, which, after being arrested for three centuries by the great combined powers of political and ecclesiastical reaction, has once more begun to flow, and which will not cease flowing till it has buried beneath its waves the last of the restraints which a false authority has imposed on the Christian conscience,—the last of the barriers which political Churches have reared in the way of the reconciliation of Christendom.

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